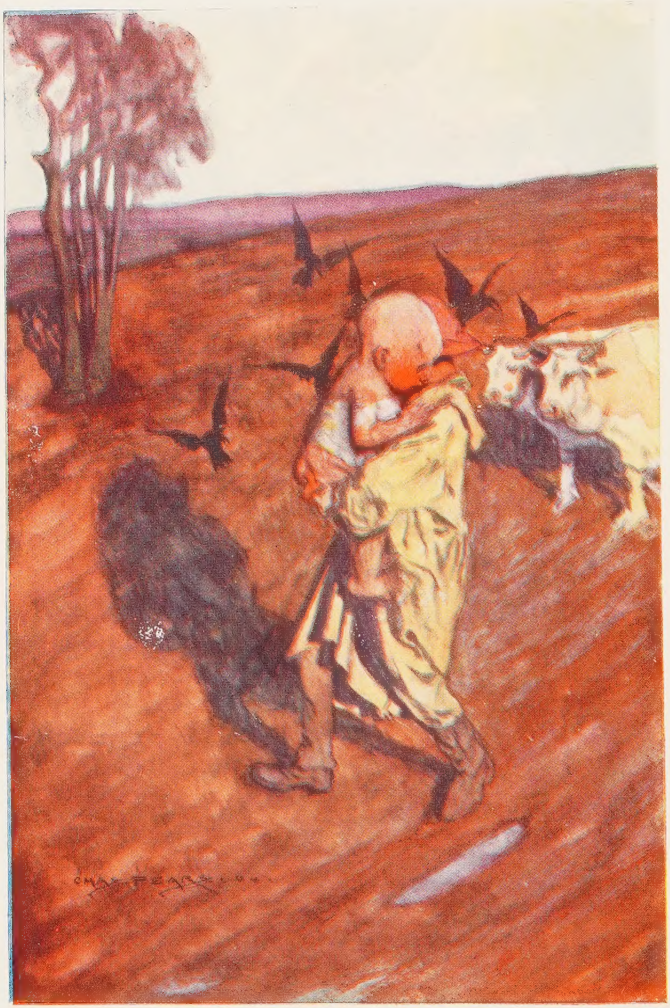
The Pedlar's Pack

by Mrs. Alfred Baldwin

Illustrated by Chas. Pears



The farmer took up his load again and strode out manfully through the cold wind.

PAGE 14.

The Pedlar's Pack.

By
Mrs. Alfred
Baldwin,

With Nine Coloured
Illustrations by
Chas. Pears,
Author and
Illustrator of
Mr. Punch's Book for Children.

W. & R. Chambers, Limited.
London &
Edinburgh.

TO MY SISTER AND FRIEND

LADY POYNTER.

When from my childish brain I spun
Tales for an audience of one,
That patient one were you, my dear.
What tales of mirth, and terror too,
I whispered in the dark to you,
Brave child who knew no bogey fear!

Deep in our hearts unchanged are we,
And so I crave my dearest fee:
Your smile upon my 'Pedlar's Pack;'
Glad if among its varied wares
There lurk some antidote for cares—
Some charm to call our childhood back.

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PRELUDE.

SIR ANTHONY, *reading in an Arbour. To him enter a* FRIEND, *carrying a crossbow and dressed for the chase.*

FRIEND. *I heard you laugh, Sir Anthony; yet find*
You sitting here alone, face buried
In a musty folio.

SIR ANTHONY. *I'faith, good friend, I'm not alone*
But in the best of company! For though
The hand that wrote this book's sepulchral dust,
The spirit of the man breathes through his work
Free and life-giving as the north-west wind!
Oh, we are debtors to the dead, who let
Not mirth die with them; leaving legacies
Of honest joy for us in troublous times!
In this stout volume you shall find stories
That, o'erleaping barriers of time, set
A man laughing with his ancestors; jests
Pungent and clean as fresh-bruised walnut-leaves;
Histories lightly touching graver things,
Compelling kindly tears that painless fall!
. . . . . .
There's that within this book suits young and old;
In choice of wares a very Pedlar's Pack!

OLD PLAY.

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RICHARD DARE.

A CHAPLET OF VERSE FOR CHILDREN.* Illustrated by JOHN D. BATTEN.

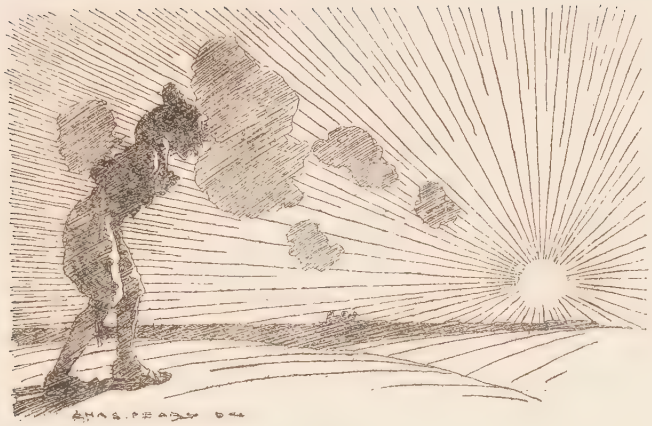
* The introductory verses here printed at the beginning of each story in 'The Pedlar's Pack' will also be found in the author's 'Chaplet of Verse for Children,' published by Mr Elkin Mathews.

The Giant's Baby.

He that guides the plough by day
Sleeps the sweeter for't by night;
He stands not in Fortune's way,
Neither feels her love nor spite.

He who delves in sun and rain
Lays him down to dreamless rest;
Rising to his toil again,
Is, but knows not, he is blest.

Health and cheer and bread enow,
These the harvest of the spade;
Lightly come is lightly go;
Fortune's but a fickle jade!



ONE cold afternoon in January, many years ago, a poor farmer named Roger was ploughing his field. A bitter wind blew through his clothing and rattled the brown leaves still shivering on the oak-trees. The soil was heavy, and Roger could scarcely drive the ploughshare through the stiff clods; and though he put forth all his strength he could not keep himself warm. At the headland of the field he stopped to stamp his cold feet and blow on his purple fingers before the lean ox turned the plough for a fresh furrow.

Roger glanced over his shoulder at the rooks following him on foot and wing, prompt to pounce

upon and devour worm or grub turned up by the shining ploughshare. The farmer was hungry, and the rooks were hungry too; so much they had in common. He drove the ploughshare deep for their sakes, as he thought, 'I am Providence to these birds, and give them food; and sure am I there is a Providence who will give me my food, if I work hard and do not lose heart.' And he began to whistle and to think of all the lucky men he had known or heard of. There was once a man ploughing, as it might be Roger himself, and he struck on an old iron pot in a deep furrow, with a king's ransom of broad gold pieces in it, and was wealthy ever after. But he remembered that the man's sons never did an honest day's work among them after their father became rich; they spent their lives in quarrelling over the inheritance they had neither earned nor deserved, and small good it did them. All the folk he could think of that had come into sudden good fortune had had a stone in the other pocket to balance it, and Roger thought that if he was not as full fed as most, at least he was happy, with his three merry children and his thrifty wife Joan.

The cold grew stronger. A red glow in the

west marked where the sun was setting below the bare horizon. It would soon be too dark to see, and he must leave his task unfinished. Roger wished he had two oxen to his plough, when he remembered that cattle must be fed, and that at the farm mouths were many and food scanty for man and beast.

Roger was ploughing the last furrow by the light of the red sunset, with the keen wind piercing him to the bone, when about the middle of the field he heard a sound that made him stand still and listen. Had it been springtime he would have said it was a stray calf bellowing for its mother. But calves there were none in January. Then the cry, though loud as an animal's, had a strangely human sound in Roger's fatherly ear, and he thought perhaps it came from lost and frightened children. He set off to the rescue, and the cause of the outcry was not far to seek. Under the hedge in the dry ditch, half-covered by withered bracken, lay the biggest baby-boy the farmer had ever seen, with eyes shut, nose wrinkled up, and screaming hard with a square mouth. The child was as tall as and much fatter than Roger's youngest girl of six years old; but

for all that it was a bald, toothless baby, that could only lie on its broad back and bellow.

The good farmer was frightened by the strange, big little baby. But he felt sorry for it; he could not leave it to die of cold in the night, and he scrambled down into the dry ditch to the helpless creature. He took it up in his arms—and a load it was to carry—wrapped its rags about it, and set it down while he loosed the ox from the plough, picked it up again, and set off with it for home, the tired beast following him. The big baby roared in his ear till Roger was deaf and dizzy It choked him with its strong, fat arms round his neck, and tried to suck one of his fingers down its wide throat. 'It would be no joke to be your mother and nurse,' said he, stumbling over the furrows with his heavy burden. The thing grew heavier and heavier; and Roger, thinking that it must be a big lazy boy that could walk and talk if he would, stopped to set the child on its feet. But it was really only a huge baby that said 'Ba! ba! boo!' in a big voice, and rolled over like a sack of potatoes.

The farmer took up his load again, and strode

out manfully through the cold wind. Though he could not keep himself warm with ploughing, the perspiration now ran down his face. His wife opened the door for him at the farm, and Roger staggered into the kitchen and set down his uncouth, roaring burden on the settle by the fire.

'What in the name of wonder have you brought home with you?' said his wife, while the children gathered round the half-naked creature.

'You can see for yourself, can't you? It's a poor baby I found in the dry ditch at the top o' the Ten Acre under the hedge, and no Christian could leave it there to starve, so I heaved it up and brought it home;' and Roger wiped his moist brow with a shaking hand.

'But that's no baby,' said Joan shrilly. 'It's as big as a six-year-old child, and stronger too, judging by the noise it makes,' and she thrust a piece of bread into the big, square mouth to quiet it for a minute; for she said, 'We can't hear ourselves for its noise. Baby indeed!'

'I tell you, missis, for all that it is a baby. I know it to my cost, for I thought a great thing like that could walk if it would, and when its weight was nigh breaking my back I plumped

it down on its feet and loosed my hold, and it sank in a heap; it can no more stand up than a bolster. Oh, it's certainly a baby, bald as a jug, and it hasn't a tooth in its cavern of a mouth, and roars instead of talking.'

'Well, a baby that will suck our best cow dry in a week. It's hard enough to feed our own children without your bringing home a ravening thing like that; so just take it back where you found it, and leave it there,' said his wife.

The farmer's son Giles, a boy of ten, was standing by the big baby eating his supper, when it snatched the large piece of bread and cheese from him, bolted it at a gulp, and held out its big hand for more.

'There, look at that! Did you ever see the like? Take the creature away, I tell you.'

'No, wife, I can't do that,' said Roger good-humouredly. 'I like its greedy ways no better than you do; but you wouldn't turn a dog out on a night like this. If you'd found the child lying out in the cold wi' scarcely a rag to its back and the wind blowing razors, you'd ha' brought it home yourself if you'd had the strength to carry it. Come, missis, don't be cross. Give

the child some milk, and I'm ready for my supper, and it's ready for me;' and Roger sat down to eat.

'Here, Joyce,' said her mother to the eldest girl, 'put that cup o' milk to the child's mouth, and see what it'll do with it.'

The big baby drained the cup at a draught, dashed it to the floor and broke it, and roared for more.

Joan was furious, and her husband looked serious. The big baby had drunk as much milk as Dick, a boy of eight years old, took at a meal. The poor farmer thought perhaps he was robbing his own children when he had listened to the big baby's cries of distress; yet how could he have hardened his heart against the poor outcast? So, thinking aloud, he said, 'You see, Joan, there was no choice. I was obliged to bring it home. But I wish for all our sakes it had been a little Tom Thumb; then we shouldn't ha' missed the bit and sup it 'ud take.'

'Yes, and Tom Thumb would have been a plaything for the children; but this Tom Bull, as you may call him for his size and his noise, is enough to bring a famine in the place.'

'Well, now you've named the lad, he's got to stay. Depend upon it, we shall be none the poorer for trying to fill that big mouth o' Tom Bull's, shall we, Meg?' and the farmer, who was eating his supper, put a bit of bacon into Meg's mouth, his little girl of six years old.

The mother was now somewhat softened, but still she must say, 'I'm afraid there won't be so much bacon on father's plate when Tom Bull begins to eat. It will be fat boy and lean larder then, and our own children will go short to puff and swell one that's none of ours. Roger, you've brought in a two-legged cuckoo that'll thrust the home-birds out of the nest.'

'When did you last see a cuckoo that hadn't two legs?' asked the farmer with his mouth full of bacon.

'You know what I mean, Roger. I mean that that great fatty is a human cuckoo in the nest, and it'll very likely kick our children out.'

Little Meg was amusing herself measuring the big sleeping baby's hand against her own, and it was every way bigger and fatter than hers.

Suddenly she ran laughing to her father's side. 'Oh father, I've such a funny thought!'

'Then tell it me, my little wench.'

Leaning her curly head against him, and pointing at the foundling, she said,

'Father, what a thing it would be if that was a giant's baby you 've brought home!'

The farmer and his wife laughed till they cried at their little daughter's funny thought, and it quite restored her mother's good humour.

'I think we can afford to chance its being a young giant,' she said, 'and do our best by Tom Bull, though we should love him more if there wasn't so much of him.'

Every member of the family ate less that Tom Bull might have enough. Even then he was always hungry and clamouring for more. And it took so much stuff to clothe him! Three ells of green frieze would not nearly cover him. Everything about him was big. When he cut his teeth they were so big that they frightened Joan, and he had such a big waist to hold a big stomach-ache, it was terrible. The cradle was too small for him, and so he slept on the kitchen settle; and when he grew older he behaved like the cuckoo, and pushed Meg out of her warm bed one night and got into her place. Tom was so heavy that Joan

could not lift him, and so strong that she dared not punish him when he was naughty; and if he had not had a good heart and loved Roger very much, he would have grown up with the manners and morals of an unbroken colt.

Before the big baby had been very long with them things began to look better at the farm. The cows yielded more milk, so that while Tom Bull drank gallons the children of the house did not go short. The sheep had two lambs each instead of one, their wool grew thicker and heavier, and sold for more money. A swarm of bees settled in the thatched roof, and the children had plenty of honey to eat with their bread. The following year the harvest was abundant; and the silly old hens, that were to have been boiled with bacon in the winter because they were fit for nothing else, ran about clucking 'I've laid an egg! I've laid an egg!' and what's more, they clucked the truth. They laid eggs by dozens and by scores, and Joan carried baskets full to market.

'Now, dear wife,' said the farmer, 'I told you when I brought the big baby home that we shouldn't be the poorer for trying to fill his big

mouth with food. And see, Providence has not only helped us to feed him but ourselves as well; we have never been so prosperous before. Tom Bull has brought us good luck, and it was a blessing that I heard him roaring in the ditch, and a blessing no giant father or mother has come to claim him and take him away from us.'

The farmer's wife knew very well that her husband spoke the truth, and she agreed with him. Yet, when Tom Bull grew into an immense boy, she grudged him his food when he ate at a single meal more than would last her family a couple of days. And he was so clumsy, he broke everything he touched. He took the tall clock and the mangle and a fourpost-bed to play with, and smashed them to bits. But he was always gentle with Joyce and Giles and Meg; and though they were grown up, he carried them wherever they liked to go on his strong shoulders, and he thought the brother clever and the sisters beautiful. The elder ones were not always good to him. They treated him harshly and ordered him about as if he were an animal; they teased him, and called him Tom Fool. Then he would have liked to kill them, which he could have

done easily, only he loved their father and would not grieve him, and so he kept his temper.

Tom worked hard on the farm, and was worth a dozen labourers. The heaviest plough was a toy in his hands. He drove it deep and straight, and the farmer did not need to keep horses, for Tom drew the great wagon himself. Presently he had grown so big and tall that he could not stand upright in the kitchen or squeeze up the narrow stairs to the attic; and Meg said, 'You see, father, after all, it was a giant's baby you brought home and he will soon be a full-grown giant.'

When Meg had made this discovery they were all easier in their minds, because now they knew how to act. So they tried to make him comfortable as a giant. They shook down a load of straw for a bed in the big barn where he could stand up and walk about. He sat on a log of wood that could not break under him as the chairs did, and a great round of the trunk of an oak served him for a table. And still he grew and grew.

Giles had become very lazy since an able-bodied giant did the farm-work, and as there

was money nowadays, he bought himself a smart coat and a good nag, and set off wandering with a full purse no one knew whither. His sisters were married and had gone away, and the farmer's wife spent the day alone in the house, while her husband and the young Giant were at work in the fields.

Now, wealth did not suit the farmer's wife. Since everything had thriven with them and they had grain and cattle and store in plenty, she had taken to hiding away every spare groat in a stocking up the chimney; and when a beggar, to whom when she was poor she cheerfully gave a crust of bread, came to the door, she shut it in his face and said, 'I've nothing for folks like you.' She was always looking into her store-cupboard, counting her pots and pans, rejoicing in her homespun linen, and contrasting all this with the empty house of old times. Though the farmer's wife knew that their ill-luck had turned from the day that her husband brought home the baby-giant, sad to say, deep in her ungenerous heart, she grudged the Giant his food, though it was easy to supply him now, when it had once been hard indeed. She harboured an evil thought

that they were now wealthy enough to treat the Giant, to whom they owed everything, as she liked, without endangering their prosperity. She hated to wheel the Giant's supper in a barrow to the barn, to see him eat at one meal more than would last her family for a whole week, and on top of all to finish off with a wash-hand basin full of thick porridge.

Joan kept her mean thoughts to herself. Had her husband known them he would have been angry indeed; but, all the same, she acted upon them. She cooked less meat for the hard-working Giant, and made it look as much as usual by putting large bones in it. She baked him huge pies with hollow, resounding paste-roofs over them, and thinned his porridge and served it in a smaller basin. At first the Giant did not notice the ill-natured trick, for he was very unsuspicious, and only wondered why he lay awake with hunger; and he would rise in the night to kill hares and rabbits, dress them, and kindle a fire to roast and eat them there and then. When at last he fully understood what it meant, he thought he would uproot his oak table, hurl it at the farmer's wife, and kill her on the spot. But he

remembered that the farmer was fond of his Joan, and he was sure that Roger did not know what she was about, so he would do nothing to trouble him.

Tom Bull could not stay where he was, working hard in the open air from morning to night till his appetite was enormous even for a giant, if his food daily dwindled on his plate. He did not like to leave the farmer, who had been a good father to him since he was a little bit of a thing that weighed only two hundredweight; but he said to himself, 'I shall hear how he prospers when I've left him. If he gets into trouble without me I shall come back to him; but I can't stay when the wife grudges me the food I eat.' So the Giant rose before the dawn, put on his best tunic, tore up an oak sapling for a stick, and set out on his adventures, taking with him Mistress Joan's batch of bread that was to have lasted the family for a week.

The Giant strode along at a great pace, and by noon was farther from home than he had ever been before, and in the heart of a great forest. He was tired but ravenously hungry, and he ate a few loaves and drank from the stream,

and looked about him for meat. Soon a stag came bounding down the forest glade, and the Giant laughed, and, saying, 'Here comes my dinner running on four legs!' he dealt it a blow with his oak sapling that stretched the animal dead at his feet. Then he drew out his big knife, and was beginning to skin the stag when he heard a horn sound, the barking of dogs and shouting of men, and in a moment he was surrounded by the hunt.

Now, the King of the country was hunting that day in the forest, and he and his huntsmen and hounds had followed the stag for hours and never come up with it. Great indeed was the King's surprise when he beheld a giant skinning his stag, and as the pack bore down upon him, seizing the dogs in his hands and hurling them away like so many rats. The huntsmen fell back, and some ran for their lives. The King had never seen a giant before, but he was a brave man and concealed his fear. He drew his hunting-knife from the sheath, and rode up to Tom Bull, his horse trembling under him with terror.

'Who are you that have killed the King's deer?' he demanded, lifting up his face to the Giant as though he were speaking to a man at an upper

window. 'Do you know that by all laws of forestry your life is forfeit?' and the King's horse plunged with fright.

The Giant looked down with a benevolent smile on the angry man and terrified horse. Then stooping as if to touch a toy he was careful not to break, he lifted the King with one hand from the saddle and set him down safely at a little distance, while with the other he held the half-frantic horse.

'Your little beast was going to bolt with you; he does not like the smell of a giant;' and he tied the animal by the bridle to a tree. 'And now, prithee, what is this about killing the King's deer and my life being forfeit?'

'You have killed the deer I have been chasing since dawn.'

'And who may you be?' asked the Giant, looking down from a great height on the top of the King's cap.

'I am THE KING!' and he had never felt so little like a king before as he did in that big presence.

The Giant looked down upon him with a broad smile as at something new and curious to behold,

but was quite polite. He pulled his forelock and made a leg; and the huntsmen hiding behind the trees, seeing there was nothing to fear, boldly advanced and crowded round the King.

'So this deer was yours,' said the Giant quietly as he cut off the animal's head. 'Well, sire, it's mine now, and I am about to roast and eat it, for I have not tasted meat to-day, and you are welcome to a slice of it if you are hungry.'

Said the King scornfully, 'A king never kills for hunger!'

'And a giant always does,' replied Tom Bull; 'and if you will bid those lazy varlets who stand staring there gather wood and kindle a fire, my dinner will be ready the sooner.' And, wishful to keep the Giant in good humour, the King bade his huntsmen fall to work.

Now, the King of the country had never before met a giant, nor had the Giant met a king, and each was interested in a new kind of man. While the venison roasted over the crackling fire and the huntsmen were setting out a meal for their master on the green turf, King and Giant talked together.

Quoth the Giant to the King:

'Sire, was your father a king?'

'Yea, surely; and my father's father before him was a king, for I belong for many hundreds of years to a family of kings, even as you come of a family of giants.'

'If I do, sire, I know nothing about it, for I have never seen any giant but myself, and not much of me either, only one of my big eyes that I saw in Mistress Joan's looking-glass, and that's the plain truth.'

Then the Giant told the King how he had been found by the good farmer in a ditch twenty years before, when he was a little bit of a thing weighing no more than a bare two hundredweight or so, and that his parents had never been seen or heard of in the neighbourhood. And the King bade the Giant tell him about his life at the farm; and when he came to an end of the simple story the King asked him why he had left such good friends. Then the Giant was ashamed to say he had run away because the farmer's wife grudged him his food—that is, he was ashamed for Mistress Joan, not for himself, so he shuffled uneasily, pretended to burn his mouth with the hot meat, and said nothing.

'Well, since you have quitted the farm and bade good-bye to the plough, what do you say to entering my service?' said the King. 'I have taken a liking to you; you shall have the title and state of the King's Giant, and live in the guard-room at the Castle, where you will be able to stand up and move about at least as well as in your barn.'

'Sire, I am willing to take service with you, and to do what you bid me well and honestly; but it must be on two conditions. The first is, that I go back to the farm at the end of two years; the second, that I have daily meat and drink enough to satisfy a giant's appetite, and that I, and not another, be judge of what is or is not enough.' And the Giant, rising from among the picked bones of the roast venison, shook down from a walnut-tree a few bushels of nuts for dessert.

The King laughed and put his arm above his head to ward off the shower of nuts.

'I have always heard that giants are stupid, but you at least can drive a shrewd bargain. It shall be as you say. I will give you good wages, and have you richly clothed in velvet and buck-

skin, as becomes the King's Giant; but you shall bear no weapon.'

'Sire, I carry my oak sapling wherever I go,' said the Giant with sullen determination.

And the King, deeming it unwise to gainsay him, said graciously, 'Yes, you may do that.'

When the King and his huntsmen returned to the Castle with the Giant walking in their midst, taller and bigger than the huge bronze statue of the late King in the market-place, the Queen and her maidens fainted with fright. But when they grew used to the Giant and found him gentle and trustworthy, the maidens played games with him, and the Queen would let him draw her for an airing in her gilded coach, as a child pulls a toy cart along after him. And he would amuse them with feats of strength that made every man in the Castle jealous to see. He cracked stones with his teeth, tore up trees by the roots, and, most wonderful of all, sat a cannon-ball flat with his weight.

The Giant led a lazy life at the Castle, and he soon wearied of walking at a snail's pace in the King's procession through the town and being stared at by the crowd. He passed his time talking and gaming with the men of the Guard;

he ate and drank too much, and grew fat and short of breath. At night he slept stretched out at full length across the doorway of the King's Treasury, so that no thief could break in without waking the Giant. This was the one useful thing that he did; his days were spent in looking on at other men's pleasures and helping the hunters, when there was nothing else to kill, to kill time.

Before the Giant had been long at the Castle he fell into black disgrace. He was making fun with the Guard after dinner, pretending to be a little weak thing and wrestling with them, when he took one of them playfully by the throat, gave him a slight shake and pinch, and, to his great astonishment, the man was dead. Then a great cry rose, 'The Giant is killing the King's Guard!' and the King himself ran into the court-yard to see what it was all about.

'What are you doing?' cried the King fiercely.

'Nothing, sire; I was but playing so;' and, to make his meaning plain, the Giant took another man by the throat, slightly shook and pinched him, and the same thing happened again. There was a second dead man on the ground.

The Giant could not understand it. He was

puzzled and annoyed. 'Sire, had I known your men were made of glass I would have handled them still more gently. On my giantly word of honour I only shook them in play, as the Queen shakes her little dog—thus;' and he seized a third man to show how gently he did it, and he would have killed him like his fellows had not the King drawn his sword, slashed the Giant about the ankles, and bade him keep his lubberly tricks for the amusement of giants. Tom Bull was to have been sent away in disgrace next morning, but a fire broke out in the Castle that very night, and the Giant rescued the Maids of Honour unsinged and unhurt from the attic windows. The Queen set the six lives that the Giant had saved from a dreadful death against the two lives he had unwittingly taken in sport, and begged his forgiveness from the King.

Meanwhile strange things had happened at the farm. Roger was grieved to the heart that his adopted son had left him, and he had no idea why or where the Giant had gone. 'Mark my words,' he said to his wife, 'Tom Bull brought us our luck, and Tom Bull will take it away. I cannot work as hard as I did; and our son won't

help us. Tom did the work of the farm, and now he is gone.'

'Nonsense!' said his wife; 'the giant-baby may have brought us our luck—I don't say he didn't—but the full-grown Giant can't take it away. We are too well-to-do nowadays for it to matter whether he stays with us or not; and as he has chosen to go elsewhere, we shall be better off than ever, for it saves us his food and drink, and a giant's keep is more than you would believe.'

Just then there came a knock at the door, and a poor man stood cap in hand on the threshold. 'Mistress, I've come to'——

But Joan cut him short. 'I know what you've come for!' and she shut the door in his face. Her husband was grieved, and rose from supper with his plate of meat to give it to the poor man himself. He opened wide the door. The man was still there, and waved the plate aside with his hand. 'Master Roger, I've come to tell you the new hay-rick's fired, and the flames have caught the outhouses!'

Wheat, hay, barley, pig-sties, and cowhouses, all were burnt in a single night; only the Giant's big barn was left standing. The bees forsook the

thatched roof, the cow and calf died, the sheep and pigs were diseased, the crops failed, and what little they reaped was carried away by a flood. The hoarded savings of half a lifetime melted like snow, and the farmer and his wife were once more on the lowest rung of fortune's ladder. 'If our dear Giant would only come back again,' said Roger, 'all might yet be well. Why did he go away? Could he have been so mistaken as to think we did not love him and make enough of him?'

Roger looked up in his wife's face, and saw there such mingled shame and sorrow that he asked her plainly, 'Joan, do you know why the Giant left us?'

Joan fell on her knees before him and owned her fault. 'It was I that was mad and bad enough to drive him and our luck away! Oh Roger, forgive me! When we grew rich I began to love riches for their own sake, and I hated to share them, not only with the poor, but even with him that made them for us. I grudged the young Giant the meat and drink his big frame needed, and I gave him less food day by day till he would bear it no longer and went away. I am justly

punished for my sin, but it breaks my heart that you must share my punishment. I have been a very wicked woman!'

'Wife, you speak the truth. I can but agree that you have been a wicked woman,' said the farmer, 'and what you have to do is to be a good woman again as fast as you can. Though we are poor enough now, we must help those that are worse off than ourselves; there must be no more turning away of poor men from this door. And, look you, pray God to forgive your greed and bring the Giant home again, that, whether Heaven trust us a second time with wealth or no, you may own your meanness to him and ask him to pardon your fault.'

Mistress Joan, having made a clean breast of it and determined to strive against the love of riches, slept more soundly that night than for a year past, and woke refreshed for her work. She showed sorrow for her ill-behaviour in many ways, and one of the best was to set aside daily part of her dinner and give it to some poor man or woman.

Meanwhile the Giant had grown heartily weary of the King's Court. He liked the King and Queen very much, and he had made many friends;

it was the life that did not suit him. He was getting fat and unhappy, overfed and underworked. When he entered the King's service the change had delighted the young Giant; it was a new world, and he looked upon it with fresh eyes. But that was so no longer, and he was tired of his empty, unmeaning life. There was neither work nor toil for his strength; he lived indoors instead of in the wind-swept fields. He went late to bed and rose late in the morning for another idle day. It was eat and drink, drink and eat, till even his giant appetite was cloyed and his iron muscle was fast turning into flabby flesh.

'Back to the farm if I am ever to play the man again!' said the Giant after a wild week's carousal with the King's lords and courtiers, in which he had neither run nor swum nor walked farther than from the guard-room to the wine-cellar and back. 'My hands want to grasp the plough-stilts again. I want the east wind to whistle about my ears and the sleet to sting my face. I want to be up in the gray dawn and warm my blood with hard work all day, and when night comes, sleep without turning or waking. And most of all I want—yes, I have come to that—I

want and need a course of Mistress Joan's meagre fare if I am ever to regain my figure and get back my eighty-four-inch waist!'

So the Giant asked to have speech of his master the King to lay his case before him. The two years of his service were nearly ended, and he said, 'If a Giant may speak his plain mind to the King, the matter is this. I am not unmindful of your kindness, nor ungrateful, but the softness of a King's Court is not for me; it would ruin a greater giant than I. Of what use am I here? It is true that I sleep against the doorway of the Treasury that no thief may break in without waking me. But if a tree-trunk were laid across the door, with a loud-barking dog chained to it, it would keep as faithful watch over the King's gold as I, and be every whit as good. Sire, look at me! I am bloated with too much rich food and drink, and from want of daily work my hands are fat and white. And more than this, I have heard that my foster-father has had nothing but loss and misfortune since I left him, and I must go home to the farm to work day and night till his good fortune comes back again. I beg of your kindness to let me go. Of what use is my giant's

strength if I may not spend it for the man who saved my life and brought me up?'

The King looked at the Giant and loved him.

'Go,' he said, 'and peace be with you; you are right. It has grieved me to see you losing your giant strength here with wine and idleness. Courts are not for giants, nor giants for Courts; but while you have lived in one you have learnt that kings are not such bad fellows, and I have learnt that giants are among the kindest and most honourable of men. I shall miss you and be unhappy for a time when I have lost you; and, by my Crown, if you were not so big and able to enforce your will I wouldn't let you go at all!'

Then the King, who hated anything sad, fell to jesting, and asked how many portraits of himself the Giant would like to take away with him to remember the King by; and he answered that if the King did him the honour to give him a single portrait of himself he would want nothing further, and would prize it all his life long. The King laughed. 'My good Giant and unwieldy friend, be thankful I shall not take you at your word! Don't you know that my image is stamped on every coin of this realm, and that one portrait of myself

would be but poor pay for two years of your faithful service?' And the King sent to the Treasury for a sack containing two thousand broad silver pieces; and the Giant, carrying his wages with him, set out homeward in two minds: grief at leaving the King, and joy at returning once more to freedom and hard work.

Now, on his way home the Giant had to pass through the forest where two years ago he had killed the King's deer. On he tramped heavily with his oak-sapling in his hand and a sack of silver under his arm, crashing through the brushwood, and forcing a way through the thicket with his broad shoulders. As he strode along he trolled forth a giant's song in a voice that frightened the birds for a mile round.

Suddenly he came upon a clearing in the forest where a band of robbers and cattle-lifters were plying their evil trade. They had just killed an old herdsman and a boy, and were about to stab a poor man who had been witness of their crime, when the shadow of the Giant fell upon them, and they looked up in terror. The Giant roared like thunder, and rescuing their victim from them, found, to his surprise, that it was his foster-brother

Giles, half-dead with fear, and robbed of his last groat.

'It is lucky I am here in time to save my brother's life, and to rid the earth of such as you,' said the Giant; and he took the murderers one after another, in earnest, as he had once taken the men of the King's Guard in jest, gave each a squeeze and a jerk, and threw him aside a dead man.

Then Tom Bull restored and cheered his brother, picked up his sack of money, and drove the cattle the murderers had stolen to restock Roger's farm. He carried Giles on his shoulder, and each told his adventures as the Giant strode along. Giles was full of gratitude to his big foster-brother for saving his life, and when he told him how poor his father had become he said he would never be lazy again, but stick to his work like a man.

When they drew near to the farm no cheering curl of smoke rose from the chimney telling of a hot meal preparing; Roger and Joan were dining on bread and cheese. But they did not forget to put by a part of it for some one poorer than themselves. They were surprised to hear the lowing of kine. It sounded strange indeed to them, who had no longer cattle in field or byre. They left

the table to go to the door and watch the kine driven past, when great was their joy and surprise to see that the Giant was the herdsman, bearing their lost son on his shoulder. Never was there a happier meeting.

The Giant carefully set his foster-brother down on the ground, and Roger and Joan kissed and embraced him. Then his father asked Giles where he had been and what he had been doing this long time past, and he said with shame, 'I have been abroad sowing wild oats when I ought to have stayed at home sowing and reaping the good grain.' And his father forgave him.

The Giant meanwhile beamed down upon them from the height of a two-story house, and as it was impossible to embrace him, the farmer's wife clasped the calf of his leg and shed tears on his instep as she bade him welcome and asked him to forgive her mean unkindness; and the Giant laughed and said Mistress Joan had a better memory than he if she called to mind anything mean or unkind under that roof. For though there was room in the Giant's big heart for a sudden gust of anger, there was no loophole for unforgiveness to slip in and take up its abode.

Then the farmer led the Giant into his barn, the only outhouse spared by the fire, and showed him his solid oak table and chair just as he had left them. But in the corner of the barn was something new that the farmer had built into the wall, in faith that the Giant would some day come home again. It was a large oven, and he explained that Mistress Joan now thoroughly understood this was the measure of the Giant's meat-pies. In future every pie baked must have only one inch between the pie-dish and the sides of the oven; and the Giant was more than satisfied.

With the return of the Giant everything began to be better at the farm. He paid all Roger's debts; he built new and larger outhouses, bought more fields to plough, and spent his silver pieces till there was nothing left but the one likeness of the King he had asked for. The herd of cows the Giant brought with him doubled in number; the new sheep and pigs increased; and with hard work, plain living, and walking fifty miles a day, the Giant soon regained his eighty-four-inch waist and his usual heavy pleasantry.

As for Mistress Joan, she was never so joyful as when baking huge pies for their dear Giant,

or brewing him hogsheads of metheglin from the honey of the bees that swarmed again in the thatched roof, since they had been told of the Giant's return.

The good farmer never tired after supper of sitting down and listening to the Giant's adventures. He loved his strange stories of the King and Queen and their gay courtiers; of the rich food and clothing, the riot and idleness of the Court. It was so unlike anything the farmer had ever either seen or thought of that it set him musing, and his foster-son always wound up a long story of how the King and his lords took their costly pleasures by saying, 'And it's all true!'

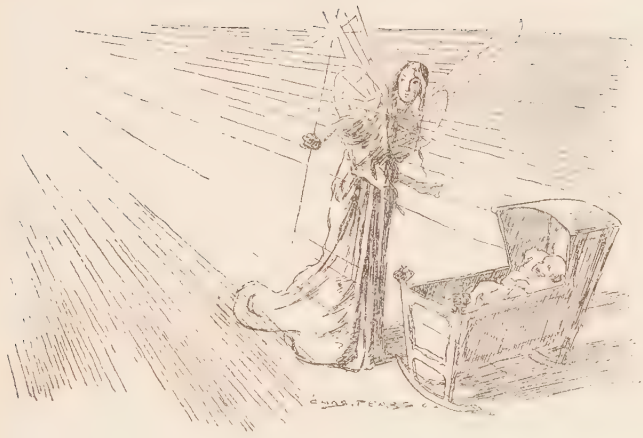
'Ay, dear Giant,' said the old man, 'and there's something else that's true as well: the plough pays for all!'

Princess Petunia and the Fairy Grimbona.

Farewell, father! farewell, mother!
Loose the homely ties that bind me.
Farewell, sister! farewell, brother!
You I love and leave behind me.

Oh! rugged roads to fortune lead,
And I must go by hill and dale.
The wanderings for me decreed
Will make a winter evening's tale.

But you will see me nevermore,
By threshold or by fireside,
Till I come bringing wealth and store,
With wedded Princess for my bride!



THE King of Aqueterra was a great king. He built a high wall round his kingdom, and planted fruit-trees against it, and grew the most beautiful grapes and peaches in the world. Only that side of his kingdom facing the sea he left open, and the white-crested waves brought ships from foreign lands laden with goods to exchange for the fruits of Aqueterra.

The King had a brave army to defend the high wall, and to keep enemies from climbing over it and invading the country. He had a navy of two ships, and a Chancellor of the Exchequer, and a Prime Minister, and a brass

band, and a policeman, and a postman; but he was not happy because he had no children. He wanted a son to help him to rule the people and to lead the army of Aqueterra; and he said to the Queen, 'Is this doing your duty, to be queen for six years without presenting the kingdom with an heir? Do you suppose I sent half my navy to fetch you all the way from your father's country to behave yourself like this?' Then the poor Queen cried and said she was very sorry; and the King, who was not really unkind but only a little hasty, said, 'Very well, then; mind you don't do it again!'

A year afterwards a little Princess was born, and the Queen was glad because now the King would think she had done her duty. But he did not. 'There is some mistake, my dear,' he said. 'I and the country wanted a Prince, and you knew it. Of what use is a little girl to me? The kingdom of Aqueterra must have a man to govern it, and I ought to have had a son. It's a nice enough little Princess, but I did not want her. I wanted her brother.' And the King rang for the Prime Minister to ask his advice. But he congratulated the King, and said the Queen had

obeyed the golden rule of politeness, 'Ladies first,' and that the Princess would doubtless be followed by several stalwart brothers.

'It is to be hoped so,' said the King, 'for if a woman reigned in Aqueterra our enemies would grow bolder; we should have to make the wall round the country three bricks higher and increase the army by at least ten men.'

'But even so, your Majesty, the kingdom might prosper under a princess. For certain merchants trading in our port and coming from an island in the north seas, called Angle or England, do say that their realm is governed by a maiden queen having the heart of a lion and the wisdom of the serpent, and the nation has remained valiant under the rule of a woman.'

So the King was encouraged, and resolved to give the nation a whole holiday to celebrate the christening of the little Princess. He sent his herald in a tabard of cloth-of-gold to proclaim his good pleasure from the market cross. He stood on the steps of the fountain, sounded his silver trumpet, and a great crowd gathered round him, and he shouted, 'Oyez! Oyez! this is to give notice that the King commands his lieges to

rejoice with him, and he has been graciously pleased to grant a whole holiday to the nation in honour of the christening of the infant Princess. It is the King's good pleasure that the weather be fine that day, that all his good people be exceeding mirthful, and if any be seen with doleful faces they shall be flogged till they be right merry. No accident will be tolerated on that day. No child shall fall down and hurt itself; no one may have the toothache or headache. It shall be the most joyful day in all your lives; and look to it that ye bear yourselves accordingly. *Le Roi le veult!*'

And the herald turned himself about and sounded a defiant blast north, south, east, and west on his silver trumpet, the bells rang merrily, and the people shouted and clapped their hands.

Many kings, queens, princes, and great men from foreign countries were invited to the royal christening. The King and Queen wrote the invitations themselves, that nobody might be overlooked; and each made a long list of names, that between them every one should be asked who ought to be asked. And they said, 'Whatever we do, we must not forget to invite the fairies or

they will be offended, and we shall make enemies for our little daughter from the cradle.'

The Queen sealed and directed a letter to the Fairy Azurlinda, and the King had dipped his pen in the ink to write to the Fairy Grimbona when a loud noise was heard under the window of shouting and hurrying footsteps. The King jumped up, put on his crown, and rushed into the street, thinking that a revolution had broken out, or a mutiny in the army, which he must quell, and forgot all about the Fairy Grimbona and her invitation. At the same moment the little Princess screamed, and the Queen hurried to the nursery to ask what was the matter. When she returned to her desk the postman had taken away the letters, the King was still out in the street, and she could not tell what invitations he had written.

The little Princess was christened in the Castle Chapel, and named after the King's mother, Queen Petunia. Never was there such a day of rejoicing. From sunrise to sunset the herald's fountain sparkled and bubbled with lemonade. There were heaps of strawberry-ice piled up in the streets, served to every one in silver spades. Showers of

buns and hot sausages fell from the windows of the Town Hall, and the crowd caught them in their caps and aprons. Big round cheeses were bowled along the pavement like hoops, and a giraffe was roasted whole. The King came out repeatedly to see if his faithful subjects were enjoying themselves, and the army marched through the town singing the national anthem. Oh, it was a high day in Aqueterra!

After the christening a great feast was held in the Castle hall, and before each guest was set a roast peacock, a boar's head, and a christening-cake a yard high. But when all were seated there were still two empty places at the table.

'The fairies are not with us,' said the Queen, 'though I wrote to invite Azurlinda with my own royal hand.'

'And I invited Grimbona,' said the King. 'They will be here directly, no doubt. But we had better not drink Princess Petunia's health till they come. I have heard of painful things happening when the fairies were not pleased.'

There was a sound of wings, and a silver car drawn through the air by milk-white swans

alighted at the Castle door, and the King hastened to welcome the Fairy Azurlinda. She was a little late, owing to the difference of time between her country and the King's; but she entered laden with christening-gifts for the little Princess. Azurlinda was bright as the day, and seemed clad in summer cloud, and in her hand was a wand like a sunbeam.

'Will the Fairy Azurlinda deign to sit down with us?' said the King. But Azurlinda, who at home dined on a butterfly's wing, saw nothing on the table to tempt a fairy's appetite, and she said that she was not hungry and would amuse herself with the baby while they ate. So the roast peacock and the boar's head and christening-cake laid for her were taken away. And still there was one empty place at table.

'I fear the Fairy Grimbona has not been asked,' thought the Queen. 'Her name was on the King's list.'

'I am certain I invited her,' thought the King, 'for I had just finished the letter when I went to see what the noise was in the street. It is no fault of mine she is not here; but it may be a bad thing for the

baby, for Grimbona is a fairy with a touchy temper.'

A gust of wind drove the smoke down the chimney, and a hailstorm rattled against the panes. An iron chariot drawn by an angry dragon crashed past the windows, and the Fairy Grimbona alighted at the Castle. The King was extremely alarmed, and hurried, crown in hand, to meet the fairy, bowing like the Mayor of the city at every step. But Grimbona insolently walked past the King into the great hall. She was dark as a moonless night, and clad in black cobweb, an ebony wand in her hand, and her black hair bound with a circlet of jet.

'I have not been bidden to this feast,' she said in hollow tones.

The guests rose trembling, and the King and Queen grew pale.

'Azurlinda has been preferred before me. She has been invited, while I—I—Grimbona, have been forgotten!'

The fairy stamped her foot and the floor shook.

'Madam, I pledge you my kingly word that I wrote you a most respectful invitation with my own royal hand,' said the King.

'Talk not to me of your kingly word. If you had written the letter I should have received it. I only heard by chance this day of the christening-feast to which I am come an unbidden guest. But I know my manners if others do not, and am not so rude as to come without a gift for the royal child;' and Grimbona laughed a wicked laugh, and turned to the golden cradle where Princess Petunia lay sleeping.

The Fairy Azurlinda laid her bright wand protectingly over the cradle, and Grimbona struck it aside with her black wand.

'What is your gift to the Princess Petunia?' she asked fiercely.

'I have given the child a heart of gold and a perfect temper,' said Azurlinda. 'Beauty is not in my power to bestow, for it is hers already.'

'Oh, is it indeed? Then we will soon change all that!' and the malignant fairy thrust Azurlinda aside and shook her black wand menacingly over the sleeping child with muttered incantations and a hideous grimace. The Queen fainted. The King rushed forward to protect his little daughter, but a touch of Grimbona's evil wand rooted him to

the floor where he stood. Then Azurlinda struck Grimbona with her bright wand, and tried to reverse the wicked charm she had recited. But it was too powerful, and the unhappy King saw Grimbona's spell begin to work. His lovely little daughter's golden curls changed to a few black bristles; her large blue eyes became dark, narrow slits. Her eyelashes fell off, her ears stood out from her head like red wings, her nose turned up, and her lips stuck out.

The wicked fairy laughed aloud.

'Now I'll leave you to admire your beautiful little Princess, and when next you have a christening perhaps you will remember to invite the Fairy Grimbona!' She walked out of the door and stepped into her iron chariot; the angry dragon spread his rattling wings and mounted into the air breathing fire and smoke.

Five years passed by, and Princess Petunia had grown five times uglier than the wicked fairy had made her on her christening-day. She was good and dear as child could be, but the King and Queen were so distressed by her appearance that they would never be seen with her in public; and because they feared it would shock her

to see the reflection of her face in the glass, the King issued a decree commanding every mirror to be broken in the Castle and in all Aqueterra.

Now, the good Fairy Azurlinda came every year, bringing a birthday present for the Princess, and to see whether the cruel Grimbona had relented and restored the little girl to her natural beauty. On her sixth birthday Azurlinda was so sorry for Princess Petunia that she gave her a wonderful magic mirror which, when she looked in it, always showed her a lovely face, and made her believe that she was very beautiful. But when others looked in it they saw themselves as they really were—ugly, plain, or handsome. It was the only looking-glass in all the land, and the Queen dressed her hair before it, and the King glanced at it in passing to see that his crown was straight. And Princess Petunia could scarcely be coaxed away from the lovely child that smiled at her whenever she looked in the Fairy Azurlinda's magic mirror.

One day when the little Princess was sailing with the Queen's maidens on the Castle lake she very nearly found out the truth. She was leaning

over the boat's side, and saw reflected among the water-lilies her own face and stunted form. When she bent forward the figure in the water came close to her; when she stretched out her hand it held up its hand and imitated every movement.

'There's an ugly thing that lives down in the water! It wears a crown like mine, and a blue dress like mine! It mocks me and does everything that I do, and it looks at me with a dreadful face!' And the little Princess told the King and Queen of the terrible creature in the lake.

Then her parents knew that she had seen her own image in the clear water, and that what she had seen once she would see again and learn the truth. So the King said, 'Never mind, Petunia; we will drain the lake and catch the great ugly fish.' And all the lakes and pools were filled up and turned into flower-beds, that the Princess might never again see her reflection in the water.

Princess Petunia had neither brothers nor sisters, and on her seventeenth birthday she was proclaimed Crown Princess and heiress to the

kingdom of Aqueterra. Then all the neighbouring Princes came to ask to marry the Crown Princess. One after another they came, and one after another they fled when they had seen her; and the Princess asked her old nurse and the Queen's maidens if there was anything strange about her beauty that drove the Princes away. But no one dared tell her the cruel truth, and she was left to the pleasant deception of the magic mirror.

Many of the young Princes came from beyond the seas, but they fled like the Princes from neighbouring countries when they saw the Crown Princess. Some pretended they were recalled to their native land, or that a war had broken out and they must go home to fight. But whatever their excuse, their conduct was the same. They all fled as swiftly as horses and ship could take them from the Court of Aqueterra.

One Prince there was who raised the hopes of the King and Queen. He arrived travel-stained from his journey, and when he had refreshed himself and put on his royal clothes he asked permission to have a first glimpse of the Princess without himself being seen. So the King took him to the Princess's bower. He entered softly

and stood behind Princess Petunia as she sat working and singing sweetly while the spinning-wheel twirled round. He looked over her shoulder, and fell in love at once with the beautiful reflection in the magic mirror.

Then the Prince crept out of the room and softly closed the door, and said to the King, 'The Crown Princess is the loveliest woman in the world! If her reflection in the glass is so beautiful, what must the reality be when I may look into her fair face!'

And the King replied, 'My daughter is as haughty as she is—hum! ha!—beautiful, and perhaps she will not allow you to see her face till after the wedding. Certainly when you meet her to-morrow in the great hall for the ceremony of betrothal she will wear a thick veil.'

'That will only be like the moon hidden by a cloud,' said the Prince joyously.

But it happened to him as to all the other Princes. When Princess Petunia threw aside her veil and came smiling towards him, at the sight of her cruel ugliness he staggered and fell down in a fainting fit. The poor Princess flung herself into the Queen's arms.

'Oh mother! am I so dangerously beautiful that my suitors faint when they see me? Tell the Prince he will get used to my beauty, and don't let him go away like the others.'

But as soon as the Prince recovered consciousness he remembered an appointment a thousand miles away, for which he feared he should be late, and he asked at once for his hat. Only the prayers and tears of the gentle Princess prevented the King from having him slain on the spot, and he rode away like the others.

'Never mind,' said the King; 'I will make a terrible example of the very next Prince who comes here to insult the heiress of Aqueterra.'

The King and Queen asked the good Fairy Azurlinda's advice in their trouble; and she said, 'Grimbona will not relent and restore the Princess to her natural beauty; therefore we had better seek a Prince who does not mind about good looks in a wife. Happily, owing to my magic mirror, the Princess believes that she is very beautiful, and she has not been hurt by knowing why the Princes run away when they have seen her. We must find a Prince who will not mind our dear Petunia's face.'

'Then he will have to be blind,' said the King gloomily.

'Leave it to me,' said the good Fairy. 'I will find a less sensitive Prince who can stand the shock of first seeing her, and learn to love her afterwards for her sweet temper and kind heart.'

The Fairy Azurlinda disguised herself as an old woman, changed her bright wand into a crutch-handled stick, and set out in quest of a husband for her dear Princess Petunia. On the third day of her wanderings, as she was climbing up a steep road, a young man overtook her, stepping out cheerily and singing,

> 'Your merry heart goes all the day,
> Your sad tires in a mile-a.'

The youth's cheeks were red as apples, his gray eyes shone like stars, and his head was covered with fair curls. He carried a stick with a bundle slung over his shoulder and a leathern wallet at his side.

'Good-day, young master,' said the fairy. 'Your legs are younger than mine; can you help me up the hill?'

'That I will, mistress, if I can; but I'm riding Shank's pony, that only carries one.' And the fairy laughed, and the youth thought what a nice old woman she was.

'I don't want to be carried; I only want your hand to help me up the steep road. What may your name be, young master?'

'Ian, at your service, mistress; and I carry my fortune under my hat and my fate in my hands.'

'You are going out into the world, are you, to try your luck?' and the old woman nodded and smiled.

'That's it, mistress; and I'm willing to do any honest work to get on. There are eighteen of us at home, and since we are too thick on the ground my father has weeded me out and given me his blessing and a threepenny-bit, and my mother has given me a pie, to go and seek my fortune in the world; and a merry world it is.'

'And when you've made your fortune you will marry some pretty maiden?' said the old woman.

'That's as it may be, good mistress; the prettiest maids are not always the best. My mother, God

bless her! is no beauty, but she makes cowslip-wine as clear as glass, and cakes so light that they fly up in the air; and she's brought up eighteen children to say a prayer night and morning, and earn their bread by honest work. My father didn't marry for a pretty face, and why should I?'

The old woman nodded approval. 'Good, good, and very good. And now I want to ask you two things, young master. Can you keep your temper?'

The young man laughed till she might have counted his white teeth.

'I don't know; I never thought about it. But I've seventeen elder brothers and sisters, and I haven't quarrelled with one of them.'

'That will do! And the second question is, Can you keep a secret?'

'That I can, for I never let out at home where the kingfisher built his nest nor where I found the plovers' eggs.'

'Then you are the young man I am seeking,' said the fairy; 'but I am afraid you are not a king's son.'

'Not unless my father is the King of Millers,

for a better miller never ground wheat;' and the young man laughed.

'Well, keep it secret for a little while that your father is only a miller, for I am going to make a Prince of you, and marry you to the best Princess in the world;' and the old woman stood upright, threw off her gray cloak, and appeared before the astonished youth as the Fairy Azurlinda, with her bright wand in her hand.

Then she told Ian the sad story of the Princess Petunia, and of the cruel spell of the malignant Grimbona that had turned a beautiful babe into the ugliest maiden alive; and how because of this, though she was good and sweet, and would one day be Queen of Aqueterra, no Prince was found brave enough to marry the Crown Princess.

'I wonder if the poor Princess is as ugly as my cousin Genefer?' said Ian. 'Without any fairy taking the trouble to spoil her looks, she's ugly enough to frighten the crows, but she's frank and brave in spite of it all. But how am I to see this Princess?'

'I will take you myself to Aqueterra. But

first I must make a Prince of you;' and Azurlinda touched Ian with her wand, and his dusty clothes turned into a blue satin suit with jewelled buttons, the leathern wallet containing the threepenny-bit and the pie became a purse full of golden ducats, his stick became a diamond-hilted sword, and the bundle melted away into nothing.

Before Ian had done admiring himself a crystal chariot drawn by twelve cream-white horses came galloping up the hill. The Fairy Azurlinda and Ian seated themselves in the chariot, and away it went like the wind.

'If you keep the secret that you are a miller's son for a few days you can be married to the Princess, and then your fortune is made,' said the fairy.

'But if so many gallant Princes ran away when they saw the Princess Petunia's face, perhaps I may be frightened too.'

'Nonsense! Princes they may have been; gallant they were not, or they would never have run away from a girl's face.'

'Perhaps the Princess may not like me when she sees me,' said Ian.

'I do not think we need be afraid of that. But here we are already at the Castle of Aqueterra, and I must leave now. You must enter by yourself, tell your own story, and not mention my name. Remember, you must show courage where other men have failed;' and the Fairy Azurlinda disappeared from his sight.

Now, the King was looking out of the window when the crystal chariot stopped at the door, and he wondered what mighty potentate had come to pay him a visit. But when he saw a handsome young man in blue satin, with white plumes on his hat, he became furious and unsheathed his sword.

'Here comes another Prince to insult my daughter!' he cried. 'Seize him and cast him into the deepest dungeon, and starve him slowly to death on bread and water!'

'And let the bread be mouldy and the water muddy,' added the Queen.

The King's guards seized Ian and hustled him through the hall, down a flight of stone steps, and thrust him into a noisome dungeon. His plumed cap and diamond-hilted sword were taken from him, and fetters riveted to his wrists and ankles.

Then said Ian, 'Tell your King from me that if this is how he receives Princes, no wonder he is still begging for a son-in-law. He needs to visit my country to learn good manners. There every farmer and miller knows how to welcome a guest.' And the guards locked Ian in the dungeon and went away, for they dared not stop to listen to treason.

Ian felt very angry when he was left alone. Then he thought what a strange day it had been. He had set out on his travels that morning from his father's mill hundreds of miles away; he had met the Fairy Azurlinda, and been turned into a Prince; and when his prospects were most brilliant and a crown almost within reach, he was cast into this dismal dungeon.

'I wanted adventures and I have them,' he said as he walked to and fro, dragging his chain at every step. 'What an unjust old fellow the King must be to condemn me unseen and unheard! He is mad no doubt, and I must trust to my wits to escape from his hands. Many a better man than I has been unjustly treated; but it's true what my mother says, this is the queerest world she ever lived in.

And I've two very odd things on me at this moment that I never had before, one that I haven't earned and the other I haven't deserved —a purse full of gold and an iron chain clanking at my heels;' and Ian fell to whistling to pass the time.

Darkness closed in. Neither food nor light was brought, and Ian wished his purse full of ducats could be turned again into the leather wallet containing his mother's pie, worth all the gold in the world to a hungry man. It was very cold, and there was neither bed nor blanket in the dungeon, and he thought it lucky that he was not a real Prince delicately reared, or he might have taken his death. His strong young body was used to hardship, and when he had said his evening prayer he fell asleep on his bench and dreamed of his father's mill.

Now, the Princess Petunia had seen from an upper window the arrival of the young Prince in blue satin, and fallen in love with him on the spot. When her father had him cast into the dungeon she begged for his release. But the King said, 'I will have no more of these humiliating refusals, nor would you if you had any proper

pride. Twelve Princes have turned their backs upon my daughter; the thirteenth I have caught before he has had the chance to insult you, and he shall die the death!'

Then Princess Petunia resolved to save Ian if it cost her her life, and she went secretly to the jailer and asked him what were the King's orders concerning the Prince.

'Princess,' he said, 'my orders are to starve him to death gradually. Every day I am to give him a piece of bread smaller than he got the day before, till he dies.'

'Alas, poor Prince! Take me to the dungeon that I may speak to him through the door.'

'To-night I dare not, Princess. We are watched. But to-morrow, when the King is in the counting-house and the Queen is in the pantry, you shall take the prisoner his bit of bread;' for Princess Petunia was so kind and gentle that it was hard to refuse her anything.

The Princess did not sleep that night for thinking of the Prince in the cold dungeon, and wondering whether, if he were set free, he too would run away when he had seen her. The next day the jailer took Princess Petunia down the dark

steps to the dungeon door, and what was her joyful surprise when she heard the prisoner singing in a loud, cheerful voice:

> 'Your merry heart goes all the day,
> Your sad tires in a mile-a.'

When he had ended his song the Princess tapped on the door.

'Who's there?' cried Ian.

'Only a poor Princess who is distressed and ashamed that you are treated so cruelly in her father's Castle.'

'You are Princess Petunia, then; and I am glad there is one member of your family who is ashamed of such high-handed cruelty.'

'Did you come here like the other Princes to ask me to'——

'To ask you to marry me—yes, Princess.'

Then the Princess whispered through the keyhole, 'If the King, my father, let you out of this dungeon, would you still ask me to marry you?'

'Yes, Princess; but first the King himself must take me out of this wretched place where he has unjustly put me, and treat me as an honest man if he will not treat me as a Prince.'

'You are the very proudest Prince I have ever seen,' said Princess Petunia.

'But you have not seen me yet,' said Ian, who did not know that she had watched his arrival; 'you have only whispered to me through the door.'

'Prince, I shall do more than whisper; I will feed you every day with food from my own plate;' and she put her hand through the slit in the door where the prisoner's food was given him. Ian kissed the hand that had come to help him, and took the piece of bread it offered, for he was very hungry.

Every day the kind hand appeared through the door with food, but little enough of it, for her parents suspected the Princess of helping the prisoner, and she was closely watched. And every day she sang to him and told him fairy tales to help to pass the time. Still Ian grew weaker and weaker, and his chains became so heavy that at last he could not crawl from his bench. Then the Princess wept bitterly, and would take no food herself, for she said, 'How can I eat while the Prince is starving?'

Now, it happened that the Fairy Azurlinda heard

rumours of evil doings at the Castle, and she came at once to see if they were true. She was much displeased, and looked sternly at the King.

'What is this I hear?' she said. 'I sent a Prince to marry your daughter, the only Prince who does not demand a beautiful wife, and you have put him in chains and cast him into a dungeon, and are starving him to death, when you ought to have gone down on your knees to him. Is this true?'

The King was ashamed to answer her.

'Send at once and order the Prince to be brought into your presence.' And the King sent the Prime Minister to fetch the Prince from the dungeon. But he returned alone.

'Sire,' said the Prime Minister, 'the young Prince is weak with starvation, but he has the spirit of a lion. "Go tell the King your master," he said, "I will not leave this dungeon, where he has most unjustly imprisoned me, till he takes me out of it himself. If he refuses I will die here, and my father will send an army to avenge my death, to break down the wall round Aqueterra, and lay waste the whole country."'

When the King heard this he trembled with rage and fear.

'This becomes serious,' he said. 'I must needs fetch this turbulent Prince myself;' and the King and Fairy Azurlinda with a bright light shining from her wand, followed by gaily dressed courtiers, went in procession down the dark stone steps to the dungeon. There they heard Ian singing with a weak but courageous voice a verse his mother had taught him when he was a child and in any kind of trouble:

'For every evil under the sun
There is a remedy or there is none;
If there is one try and find it,
If there is none never mind it.'

And as they listened the ladies wept and said the dear Prince was like the swan, singing as he died. Then the King bade the jailer throw open the door and strike the fetters from the prisoner's limbs.

'I am afraid I have been a little hasty with you,' said the King as Ian stood up before him pale and trembling, but without fear.

'Since your Majesty admits so much we will say no more about it,' he said politely. The

Fairy Azurlinda stepped forward and touched Ian's purse, and it became once more the leather wallet containing his mother's pie, hot and fresh as if just drawn from the oven.

'Eat it, my brave Prince! eat it. Never mind our royal presence,' said the King graciously; and Ian ate his pie like a tiger which had not picked a bone for a month, and immediately he felt so much stronger that he walked up the steps with the help of the King's arm.

When they reached the great hall, Ian looked a very poor creature by daylight. He had neither washed himself nor brushed his hair for weeks; his blue satin clothes were soiled and mouldy, and hung loose on his half-starved body. But Azurlinda soon made him look like a prince again, and bade them restore his diamond-hilted sword and cap with nodding plumes. Then he was presented to the Queen, and the King asked him what had brought him to the Castle.

'I came to ask the Crown Princess to be my bride.'

'And have you heard of other Princes who came for the same purpose, and ran away when they had seen the Princess?' asked the King.

'I know it all, your Majesty, and I am the Prince who will not fly from a woman's face.'

The King was exceedingly pleased with Ian's spirit, and said, 'Be it unto you according to your courage!' and Princess Petunia, wearing a thick veil, entered the hall with Fairy Azurlinda.

Ian advanced to meet the Princess and kissed her hand respectfully.

'This is the hand,' he said, 'that saved my life and brought me food in my dungeon. Dear Princess, you were my only friend when no man stood by me; but for you I should have died of starvation. If you will be my bride I will more than requite your goodness.'

Then Princess Petunia laughed for joy to see her dear Prince alive and well, and far handsomer even than she had imagined, and she promised with all her heart to marry him. She threw back her veil and uncovered her face with a confident air. Ian staggered and his colour came and went. But he forced himself to smile, and pretended it was weakness only that made him feel faint. The Princess was ten times uglier than his cousin Genefer, and he tried to hope she might be ten times nicer. But whether or not, she

had saved his life, and was willing to marry him, and he was in honour bound to her. Ian shut his eyes and bravely kissed the Princess on the cheek. Every one clapped and shouted 'Hurrah!' cannon were let off in the courtyard, and trumpets sounded loudly. When Ian could hear his own voice again he said solemnly, as though he were announcing a funeral, 'Your Majesty, I am ready to marry the Crown Princess at noon to-morrow.'

The trumpets sounded once more, and the Fairy Azurlinda whispered to Ian, 'Good, good, and very good! All will yet be well;' and to the Queen, 'Do not forget to ask Grimbona to the wedding!'

Invitations were sent out directly lest the bridegroom should change his mind. Ian spent the night eating and drinking to make up for being starved, and in trying to forget the Princess's terrible face. He thought if Princess Petunia had a magic mirror to make her believe that she was beautiful, he ought to be allowed, for his comfort, to look her into favour through magic spectacles.

With dawn of day came Azurlinda to warn Ian of the wicked Fairy Grimbona. 'She will bring the Princess a lace veil for a bridal gift. But do not let her put it on, for it would burst

into flame and she would die a dreadful death. Throw the veil on the ground and it will burn itself out. Draw your sword and smite Grimbona's black wand in two, and Princess Petunia's ugliness will instantly fall from her face like a hideous mask, and her own true beauty shine forth. Then seize the loathsome thing and press it closely on Grimbona's face, where it will immediately stick fast, and neither fairies nor men can ever move it again. Fear nothing; only do as I tell you;' and the good fairy left him, promising to return in time for the wedding.

By noon the guests were assembled, and among them the Fairies Azurlinda and Grimbona in glittering jewels, each carrying her magic wand. Ian was very splendid, and the King and Queen said, 'He is the noblest Prince we have ever met, and Petunia is indeed fortunate.'

The Crown Princess looked most dreadful in her bridal dress; and though Ian knew she would soon be freed from the spell laid upon her, his courage was severely tried. As soon as the marriage ceremony was ended the wicked Grimbona said, 'Princess, I have come to your wedding, bringing a bridal gift, to show how I

forgive your parents for not inviting me to your christening-feast;' and she offered a veil fine as spider's web to the delighted Princess. But Ian snatched it from her hand and threw it on the stone floor, where it burst into flames.

'Vile witch!' he cried as he flashed his diamond-hilted sword from the scabbard and cut Grimbona's wand in two, 'you thought that you had killed my bride; but your power is at an end; the hour of punishment has come.'

The wicked fairy writhed with helpless rage, the Princess Petunia's ugliness fell from her like a hideous mask, and her own natural beauty shone forth.

Quick as lightning Ian picked up the dreadful thing, and seizing the wicked Grimbona, pressed the horrible mask closely upon her face, and it stuck fast for ever.

'Take back your own gift,' he said. 'The face that you thought fit for my bride to wear for seventeen years is good enough to last you for the rest of your life!' Then Princess Petunia saw for the first time what she herself had looked like while the spell was upon her, and she shrieked aloud.

sent for one of his old crowns and put it on his son-in-law's curly head, and called him, 'Prince Ian Miller.'

And by that name Ian was known till the King died, and he and the beautiful Princess Petunia became King and Queen of Aqueterra.

Conrad of the Red Town.

Where are the Elves and Fairies fled,
That danced beneath the moon;
The Little Folk in jerkins red,
Peaked cap, and high-heeled shoon?

Where are they hidden from our sight?
Are they within the hill?
Will they return some moonlit night,
Or are they with us still?

Fairies are with us, and will be
As in the days of old;
But we have lost the eye to see
And know what we behold.

ONCE upon a time in a fair valley there was a town enclosed by red walls crowned by red towers. The red houses in the streets had high red-tiled roofs. The Schloss, the churches, the Rathhouse in the market-place, were built of red brick; the fountain with the statue of the huntsman holding the red deer by the horns was carved in red stone; and, because everything in the town was red, what better name could it have than the Red Town?

The Red Town was in a fruitful country, watered by a broad stream, in summer drought dwindling to a silver thread that lost its way wandering in the dried-up bed of the river. Orchards and vineyards came so close to the town

that the children playing on the ramparts gathered red apples from the boughs through the loopholes in the walls. They looked down on the slow oxen drawing the loaded wain from the vineyard, and saw the grapes crushed till the red juice poured out and became bright red wine. The very cows in the fields were red. The cock that crowed in the morn had a red eye and a fierce red wattle, and the good people had red cheeks, and some of them red hair, and all were proud that they were born and lived in the Red Town.

The Red Town was known by its colour from afar. Many a traveller riding up the valley after a stormy night has caught sight of the rain-washed walls shining crimson in the sunrise; and in the evening light the Red Town glowed among the meadows like a ruby set in green enamel, so that the wayfaring stranger thought that he beheld a fairy vision and no real abode of living men.

Two gates there were to the Red Town: one in the tower to the east overlooking the corn-fields, and called the Breadgate; the other in the tower on the south overlooking the vineyards, and called the Winegate. Both gates were shut and barred

at night, and the dwellers in the town slept in safety. There had been no war for some years to desolate the country, and children were growing up to the blessed heritage of peace that their fathers had fought and died to secure. Among these was young Conrad, whose father had been killed fighting on the walls of the Red Town longer ago than the boy could remember. Conrad's mother was left in poverty; but she was young, strong, and industrious, and kept herself and her child by spinning. Her old father, a cobbler, lived with them, and between the two they earned enough money to supply the simple needs of a household that had few wants and no fancies to gratify.

They dwelt in a small red house built high on the town wall near the Winegate. The front of the house was reached by a long, straggling flight of steps, and the back had no outlet. From the leaded casements you saw the wide valley bounded by blue hills, or you could lean out of the window and look straight down the face of the red wall and the rock it was built on, to sunny vineyards below. A rusty weather-vane on the gable of the attic where Conrad slept creaked and groaned for a

drop of oil that could only be taken to it by means of a long ladder, which the boy was too young and the grandfather too old to climb.

Conrad began betimes to help his mother, and when he was ten years old a farmer hired him to take care of his geese. He was a strong, merry boy, red-cheeked, blue-eyed, and sunburnt, with a thatch of yellow hair. Early every morning he drove his cackling flock before him with a willow-wand tufted with leaves to switch over them when they were silly and obstinate. On through the town he led them, out by the Winegate where old Ulrica the applewoman sat under the arch at her fruit-stall.

Conrad easily carried his light dinner in his pocket, and he stopped on his way to add to it a handful of cherries. The boy was a great favourite with the old woman, who had known him all his life, and if she could have afforded it she would never have taken money from him for anything. But she always gave him more cherries for a groschen than to any one else, and good words into the bargain. She would push the curls back from his brow, and say, 'You have elf-locks, my child. Your hair grows as the fairies love it to

grow. They have set their mark upon you; take care, or they will steal you away. Remember, you are only safe so long as you neither eat nor drink anything they offer you. If you eat a morsel of their food or drink a drop of their wine you give yourself to the fairies, and they will take you away.'

The boy laughed and shook his yellow locks, and said, 'How can I eat their food or drink their wine, grandmother, when I have never even seen a fairy?' and he switched his roving geese into a flock before him, cackling like the women at their cottage doors on a summer evening when the day's work is done.

Conrad was a clever little gooseherd. He knew where to find sweet, short grass, or the clean water for his birds to drink, and in autumn he led them to the stubble-fields. He took great pride in his work, and wore a long white goose-quill in his cap that every one might see he was a gooseherd.

Neither Conrad, his mother, nor his grandfather could read. The only book they had seen was the big Bible chained to the desk, that the priest read from in the church. But their memories were the more sure from having no books to refer to. They

were obliged to remember what they had heard, and their minds were stored with tales and legends and wise sayings handed down from generation to generation.

One winter evening, while the widow was spinning busily, and Conrad was preparing goose-feathers for the arrow-makers, and the cat sat thrumming a song of her own invention, the grandfather told them wonderful stories as he mended a huntsman's boot. Old Ulrica was with them, seated in the most comfortable chair, sharing the warmth and candlelight, and without asking their leave she threw fresh logs on the fire, which she was loath to do in her own hut. Now, the applewoman could tell even stranger and longer stories than the cobbler, and she was a very impatient listener. So, when he came to that part of his story where the Prince smites off the dragon's head, and red roses sprang up wherever a drop of the dragon's blood fell, she said, 'Yes, yes, that is all very well; but now I want you to listen to a true story. And true I know it is, because I had it from my great-grandmother, and she had it from her great-grandmother.'

'And she had it from the father of lies!'

shouted the cobbler, for nothing made him so angry as to be interrupted by the applewoman.

When peace was restored the grandfather began his story over again from the beginning. After he had finished the old woman had her turn, and if the cobbler interrupted her she too went back to the beginning of all things, so that Conrad learned many wonderful tales by heart. The grandfather's stories were about witches and dragons, war and pestilence, and Conrad liked them because they made him shudder. The old applewoman's stories were of fairies and elves that danced in rings by summer moonlight on the grass, of changelings and dwarfs, of weird and pretty things that graved themselves deep in the boy's mind.

One story of old Ulrica's annoyed the grandfather exceedingly, and he bet a pound of cobbler's wax it wasn't true. Neither did it please Conrad's mother; but that was because it frightened her. She thought it might really have happened. The applewoman said that two hundred years ago, here in the Red Town, the fairies had stolen a beautiful boy of Conrad's age, and carried him away. They offered the child fairy-food to eat, and no sooner had he swallowed it than he forgot home and

parents, and followed the Little People out of the Winegate into the country to a green hill where the fairies danced by moonlight. The boy joined in the dance, and when the moon had set and all was dark, just before dawn the hillside opened, and there came out sweet music and a brilliant light. The dancers trooped into the opening, the hillside closed upon them, and neither boy nor fairies were ever seen again. The green hill stood to this day to witness whether or not her story was true. But the worst of it was that the applewoman said that the Little People stole a child out of the Red Town every two hundred years. Let Conrad be on his guard, for his hair grew in elf-locks such as the fairies loved. They must never say she had not warned them.

Winter wore itself away and bright spring came at last. Conrad was up at break of day to drive his cackling long-necked flock through the Winegate into the country. With his dinner in his pocket and the white goose-quill stuck in his cap, he sang and whistled gaily as he led his birds to find the short grass and to drink from the clear pool. But wherever he went he looked for traces of the Little People; nor was it long before he

found what he sought. One day when he had driven his geese hissing and stumbling farther than usual, they all fell asleep in the hot sunshine, with their heads tucked under their white wings. Conrad left them for a little while he wandered about the fields gathering wild-flowers. To his surprise, he came upon a large circle of grass of darker green than the rest of the meadow, and he knew it for one of the 'fairy rings' Ulrica had told him about. It marked the spot where the fairies danced by moonlight, and he might hope soon to see the fairies themselves.

That night when the geese were safe in the farmer's barn, Conrad's mother and grandfather asleep in their beds, and the gates of the Red Town shut and bolted, the boy let himself down with a rope from his attic window. He alighted in the boughs of an apple-tree, and was soon on the ground, where he took to his heels across the open country. Conrad had never before been out so late, and he was astonished to find how many creatures were awake in the dead of night. The air was full of the buzz of busy insects, a little rabbit with long ears and white scut bounded across the path, wood-pigeons cooed softly, grasshoppers

chirped and leapt, the nightingale poured out her song, and the owl cried *tewit, tewoo.*

When Conrad reached the meadow where the fairy rings grew, the silvery moon shone bright as day. He hid himself in a great wild-rose bush, and, peeping out from the thorny, sweet-smelling branches, beheld the very sight he longed to see. On the green turf a great circle of tiny creatures were dancing hand in hand, swaying to and fro with shrill laughter, capering and throwing up their heels to the sound of merry music that came from an invisible source. The tallest of the Little People did not come up to Conrad's knee. They were perfectly formed little men; there was not a woman elf among them. They were inexpressibly nimble and neat in their close-fitting garments, and each wore on his head a little peaked cap with a feather in it. Their small faces between lank locks of dark hair looked old and cunning, their voices were high and thin, and they spoke in rhyme instead of prose. All that Ulrica had told Conrad was true. Without doubt these were the Little People.

Conrad was not afraid, but overawed, so that he neither moved nor spoke. His eyes were fixed

on the antic dancers; he followed their every movement with breathless attention. Just then a thin cloud veiled the moon, and he no longer saw clearly light, capering heels and nodding peaked caps; and one of the elves sang shrilly:

'Brother, brother, much I fear,
Mortal eyes are peeping here!'

And another answered him:

'Twice a hundred years have past
Since mortal eye beheld us last!'

Then a clear, sweet sound was heard from far away, and all the little dancers sang:

'Oh, these are elfin horns that blow,
And when they call us hence we go!
When elfin horns blow clear and sweet
We must haste with nimble feet.'

Moonlight once more flooded the meadow, but it shone only on grass and wild-flowers; the Little People were gone. Conrad sprang from the wild-rose bush into the open field, where a moment before the merry elves had danced, and he was the only living creature there. Back to the Red Town he ran, climbed into the apple-tree, up the

rope to his attic window, and was soon asleep, dreaming he heard the blowing of elfin horns from over the hills and far away.

Night after night when the moon shone Conrad went secretly to watch the Little People dance, till he grew pale for want of sleep, and his mother thought that he was ill. He was late in driving the geese out in the morning, and the farmer complained that he was getting lazy, and threatened if he did not mend his ways to put another gooseherd in his place. But neither tears nor threats availed. Conrad grew more and more dreamy. He heard the horns of elfland blowing night and day, and cared for nothing but to watch the tiny dancers circling hand in hand over the fields in the pale moonlight.

The Little People were uneasily conscious that mortal eyes were fixed upon them in their wild gambols. One night when they were merrier than ever, Conrad laughed outright at their antics, and they saw his pale face peering from behind the trunk of an oak. Instantly each tiny elf dropped his brother's hand. The great ring broke up into a scattered throng of shrill-tongued mites that swarmed about him thick as bees. Conrad tried

Instantly a nimble little man ran like a cat up Conrad's side and perched on his shoulder

to run away, but his feet were rooted to the ground. He tried to speak, but he could not, for his mouth was dry. The crowd of elves seethed round him, filling the air with the thin clamour of their voices. One of their number pointed at Conrad with a lean yellow finger, and said:

'Tell us, mortal, by what right
You have watched us dance to-night?'

And Conrad confessed that he had no right to be there. Curiosity had brought him, and he begged forgiveness if he had unwittingly offended.

The elf replied:

'We do not forgive so fast,
Nor do we overlook the past;
Those who pry and those who prowl
Must be beaten till they howl.'

And hundreds of tiny hands dealt Conrad stinging blows about his feet and legs till he cried out with pain, and the Little People laughed with glee.

Then the elf said:

'By elfin law you ought to die,
Thus we punish those who pry.
Death is certainly your due;
But, as mortal days are few,

Live your life out to its span,
From boy to youth, from youth to man.
And remember to the end,
Never, never more offend!
Since by stealth you've seen the elves,
We must mark you for ourselves!'

Instantly a nimble little man ran like a cat up Conrad's side and perched on his shoulder. He seized a lock of the boy's yellow hair, and ran a tight knot in it that neither tooth nor nail could undo. A shrill laugh rose from the Little People; the elf climbed down from Conrad's shoulder as nimbly as he had mounted, and they seemed to forget all about him.

Once more they joined hand in hand and spun round in giddy rings upon the grass, casting wild shadows in the moonlight as they danced, singing:

'Before the acorn held the oak
We fairies were an ancient folk.
Before the hills and forests grew
We danced on grass and quaffed the dew.
Before the hare fled from the hound
The meadow was our dancing-ground.
Before the hunter led the chase
The fairies were an ancient race.'

Then the elf who was spokesman for them pointed at the moon, and said:

> Brothers, hasten; we must fly!
> The moon is sinking in the sky!
> Here we may no longer wait.
> Conrad follows soon or late.'

And the elves were gone. The boy rubbed his eyes, but could not see how they had gone.

When Conrad ran back to the Red Town, and clambered up into his room, he tried hard to undo the knot the elves had tied in his hair. The more he pulled it the tighter it became. Nothing would stir it. It was on the side of his head where his cap would not hide it, and even the boy saw that it gave him an uncanny look. His mother and grandfather cried out at his pale face with dark rings round his eyes, and wild, knotted hair, and tried to comb it out, but in vain.

They sent for the old applewoman to give her opinion, for they were aware that this was no ordinary case. When she saw Conrad's hair she struck her hands together in dismay. 'These be elf-locks as sure as my name's Ulrica and I sell apples eight for a groschen under the Winegate.

Boy, what have you done that the elves have set their mark upon you? Quick, give me the scissors! I will cut out the knot, breathe on it three times, and cast it over my left shoulder into the fire before any evil happens to the child.'

But the scissors were powerless. Snip and snap as the old woman would, she could not cut Conrad's hair. His mother tried with no more effect; and, lastly, the grandfather brought the sharp shears that he cut shoe-leather with, and said, 'I warrant these will cut off little boys' hair and their naughty little heads too!' But Conrad's yellow hair was like wire. It turned the edge of the shears, and that was all that happened; the knot was firmer than ever. Then Conrad's mother began to abuse old Ulrica, and said all the trouble came of the silly tales about fairies and elves she had told the boy. Ulrica scolded back again, and the grandfather railed at both; and while the three squabbled the cause of the dispute slipped unnoticed out of the house.

Conrad soon discovered that the elf-knot tied in his yellow locks was no badge of disgrace, but a

mark of favour. The Little People often met him now by daylight without waiting for the moon to shine, and helped him in his work. When his geese were troublesome and took to wandering, the elves ran after them, and mounting on their backs, brought them to him again in a flock. And one windy night when Conrad could not sleep for the groaning and creaking of the rusty weather-vane above his attic window, he saw in the moonlight a tiny man dressed all in green astride the gilded arrow. When a gust of wind twirled it round with a harsh noise the elf dropped oil on the rusty iron till it worked silently and smoothly, and coughed a little thin cough at his own cleverness.

When Conrad slept late in the morning, tired with watching the moonlight dancing, the elves sent his cackling flock in time to meet him at the Winegate, so that he might not get into trouble with his master. The Little People showed their goodwill in many ways, and they once brought fairy-fruit to refresh him when he was hot and weary. But luckily he remembered Ulrica's warning, and though he was much tempted, he refused to eat.

One bright summer's day a wonderful thing happened in the Red Town. A shining youth clad in white-and-gold, riding a white horse richly caparisoned, and carrying a silver trumpet in his hand, rode slowly under the Breadgate, through the Schloss Street into the market-place. All who saw the glorious stranger felt compelled to follow him in the hope of learning who he was and what was his business in the Red Town. Men, women, and children gathered about him; and aged folk and cripples joined the increasing throng that filled the streets. They moved in silence, overawed by the brilliant stranger, who neither spoke nor looked to right or left. When he reached the market-place he drew up his white horse before the Town Hall, facing the coppersmiths' and potters' booths, put his silver trumpet to his lips, and sounded three blasts.

It was a wonderful trumpet: not very loud, yet it was heard in every corner of the town, and rang through every street and house. It woke from sleep every sick person and little child, and thrilled the ears of the deaf. When they heard it the whole town felt that something wonderful

was about to happen, and the market-place was soon thronged from end to end. Then the magnificent trumpeter spoke, and each listened as though his life depended on what he heard. These were his words:

'Good people of the Red Town! I have come from afar to tell you that early to-morrow morning a great and wonderful procession will pass through your streets, entering the town by the Breadgate, and leaving it by the Winegate. In the market-place there will be seats where you will sit to watch your uninvited guests pass by. It will be useless to ask whence they come or whither they go. Enough that you will witness a pageant such as you have never seen before and will never again see in the Red Town.'

The trumpeter turned his white horse about, and walking at a foot's pace through the silent, wondering crowd, left the town by the gate opposite to that by which he entered. Beyond the Winegate all trace of the beautiful stranger was lost. If all had not either seen or heard the mysterious trumpeter they would have thought both visit and proclamation a dream; and a

great clack of tongues rose in the crowd after the unaccountable silence that had restrained them in his presence.

When Conrad came home in the evening his mother and grandfather told him all that had happened while he was abroad with his geese. The old applewoman, too, had seen the wonderful stranger, and did not hesitate to say that he had come from the Fairy Court.

This, however, the grandfather would not allow, and for this reason: they knew very well that the Grand Duke of Schwartwurst had long had a grudge against their town, and it was evident that he had laid a trap to cast ridicule upon it by trying to bring a gaping crowd together to make fools of them all. The Duke's trumpeter no doubt was a splendid youth royally clad; but fine feathers make fine birds. And as to seats in the market-place, who was going to put them up? he should like to know. It was some scandalous hoax of the Duke's, and they ought not to have let the trumpeter go away unquestioned. The old man forgot that he had been one of the crowd, and was as unable to speak as the rest. 'No fooling shall take me abroad

to-morrow, early or late,' said he. 'You can go if you like, and get laughed at for your pains. I shall stick to my last!'

Conrad could not sleep for thinking of the strange trumpeter, and wondering what the morrow would bring forth. He would have been surprised had he known that he was the only human creature awake that night. For deep sleep had fallen on the inhabitants of the Red Town. From the Burgomaster himself to the blind beggar in the front of the church, from the wearied old man to the teething baby, all slept as quietly in their beds as their forefathers in their graves. But when Conrad in his restlessness looked out of a front window of the house, the narrow street below was thronged with the Little People hurrying to and fro; and a sound of hammering came from the market-place as of many carpenters hard at work. Though Conrad was the only person awake to feel it, there was an indescribable sense of stir and expectancy in the air. At last he too fell asleep with his head resting on his arm on the window-sill.

Very early in the morning Conrad and every other sleeper in the Red Town were waked by

the ringing and pealing of bells. The bells of the Town Hall, the bells of the Schloss Tower, and the church bells were clanging, tolling, and chiming; nor could they tell who rang them, for no order had been given that the town should be waked in this way. Conrad looked out of the casement, his mother and grandfather looked out of theirs, and as far as he could see down the street, night-capped heads were stretched out of every window. The morning sun shone from a cloudless sky; birds flew to and fro, scared by the clamour of the bells; banners floated on the high houses, and the road was covered with freshly mown grass. A great deal of work had been done during the night, and preparations made for a grand pageant.

Conrad's grandfather was as much excited as any one else. He forgot all that he had been so sure about the day before, and in a few minutes he and his daughter and grandson were hastening with crowds of fellow-townsmen to the market-place. And what a sight met their eyes! The whole wide place decorated with green boughs and banners; seats rising one above another half-way up the houses, ready to be

filled with spectators; and the open spaces grass-strewn and kept clear for the procession. None knew by whose hands the town had been transformed in the short summer night. The people were sure that the strange words of the trumpeter were about to come true, and they were too much bent on seeing the great sight to stop to ask questions that no one was able to answer.

Soon every seat in the stands, gay with fir-branches and flowers, was filled, and the foot-paths thronged with sightseers, while the bells overhead still chimed and tolled. Conrad, his mother and his grandfather, and the old apple-woman, stood on the curbstone dumb with amazement at the changed aspect of the market-place. The old cobbler put on his spectacles, for, though he said there would be nothing to see, he was determined to see it, and be able to contradict any foolish stories that might be told about it afterwards.

Every dweller in the Red Town not bedridden was now in the streets. Mothers carried their babies in their arms, and fathers held their little ones on their shoulders so that they might look over

the heads of the crowd. No one was left behind, no one stayed indoors even to kindle the morning fire, and no cheerful smoke rose from the red chimneys. All eyes were turned towards the Breadgate. A tall stranger clad in green drew back the bolts and opened the wide doors to the east, and the sunshine streamed through the great arch under the tower on the grass-strewn way.

The trumpeter of yesterday, in gold-and-white, was the first to enter the Red Town. Behind him on the winding road, far as the eye could reach, stretched a glittering procession of glorious beings, some walking, some riding, and all in shining raiment. He sounded a fanfare on his silver trumpet that mingled with the tolling and chiming of bells. By his side, holding his stirrup, ran a little withered goblin chuckling to himself with silent glee. After him followed groups of maidens wreathed with flowers, singing sweetly in a foreign tongue, and no man knew the words they sang. Behind them, in a silver car, came Oberon and Titania, King and Queen of the Fairies, and Titania's veil fell about her clear and bright as moonbeams. Sprightly Ariel floated lightly by them, and merry Puck flung up his

heels in the fresh-strewn grass underfoot. Sprites and elves and fairies innumerable followed the King and Queen, some riding on hedgehogs and squirrels, some in tiny cars drawn by fluttering doves.

Not far behind the brilliant group a distinguished figure was seen and greeted with delighted recognition by old and young, and cries of 'Puss in Boots!' rent the air. A magnificent tortoise-shell cat majestically walking on his hind-legs, with tail waving courteously, advanced hat in hand, bowing acknowledgments to right and left. The Marquis of Carabas accompanied him, and Dick Whittington followed, carrying his favourite cat in his arms. But none of them attracted so much attention as gallant Puss in Boots, who looked and behaved as if the whole pageant had been devised in his honour.

Presently Hänsel and Grethel drew all eyes towards them. They were crumbling their bread and dropping it as they walked for a clue to lead them through the forest home again. Behind them toddled the Babes in the Wood hand in hand, and beside them hopped pious Robin Redbreasts who were soon to bury them under the fallen

leaves. At sight of the little wanderers, and thinking of the wicked uncle of the pretty Babes, the women in the crowd cried and held their children closer. But before their tears were dry they were laughing at the pious Robins pecking and eating up the guiding crumbs as fast as Hänsel and Grethel dropped them.

Next came Cinderella, bright and beautiful, the Prince carrying the glass slipper; and her Step-sisters, ugly as they were bad-tempered, stalked after her. Then followed, for contrast, the sweet little sisters Snow-White and Rose-Red dancing along, each clinging to the furry arm of the kind and smiling Bear. Behind them hastened along the old Witch clutching the cage with Jorindel in it, whom she had by her evil art changed into a bird. She was closely pressed by Jorind, who sought to disenchant his love and restore her to her natural form. The Witch was hissed by the crowd, and stones were thrown. Red Riding-Hood then came tripping along with the fierce-eyed Wolf that pretended to be her Grandmother, and cries were heard of 'Oh, the cruel brute!'

Storms of cheers burst forth when Beauty and the excellent Beast walked past together. Then fol-

lowed the Dwarf Brothers with Snow-White in her glass-coffin, to whom the wicked Stepmother gave the poisoned apple. The Sleeping Beauty was then borne past, and after her came Rapunzel with her wonderful hair hanging down and carried behind her like a train by a couple of pages. Then followed a homely group that was greeted with broad smiles, Little Rumpelstiltskin stamping with rage because they had guessed his name; and the King and Queen and fat nurse carrying the royal baby, all laughing at the dwarf's impotent rage.

Next came Tom Thumb riding gallantly on mouse-back, and every one said how lucky it was the cats went first in the procession, where they could neither see nor smell the saddled and bridled mouse. Towering above Tom Thumb followed Jack, bearing a branch of the Beanstalk taller than himself, and close to him the fair Sister with the Enchanted Brothers. Next after them came singing past a delightful company of lucky younger sons, light of heart and light of purse, with a heritage of courage and good humour that overcame ill-fortune everywhere. After them came stupid and sullen giants of many lands, Cornish, Welsh, and German,

walking heavily, and shaking the ground as they trod.

All, all were there: fairies, dwarfs, elves, and sprites, heroes and heroines of the wondrous tales handed down from generation to generation! Old men and women felt themselves once more little children at their mothers' knees as they saw their earliest friends troop past them, and they searched with dim eyes to find their young parents among the motley throng.

None noted how time was passing. The sun was high in the heavens, and still the enchanting procession went on its way with floating banners and silvery clash of music. Conrad's mother was crying, and said, as she grasped her boy's hand, 'Ah, what a world is this! To think that I should see Cinderella alive and well, while my sweet young mother who first told me of her lies in the churchyard!'

'Hey! what is that you say?' said the old cobbler. 'What are you grumbling about? Haven't you got me? Haven't you got an old father alive?' and he took off his spectacles and rubbed them bright on his leather apron.

Conrad had watched the marvellous sight with

breathless interest. Several times, without knowing what he was doing, he had leapt on the grass-strewn road as though he were about to join the procession, and had been pulled back again to the curbstone by his mother and the applewoman. Some of the Little People as they passed by pointed at the knot in his yellow locks and threw in his face handfuls of rose-leaves, which faded to nothing as they touched his cheek. Among the elves he recognised many whom he had seen dancing in the meadows in rings by moonlight, and they nodded and beckoned and called him by his name.

Just then a beautiful Fairy Prince, on a milk-white horse and clad in silver armour, rode in among the elves, carrying in his hand a golden dish of ripe many-coloured fruit. He looked at Conrad, who was hot and thirsty with standing in the sunshine, and threw him a juicy red strawberry. The boy caught it and ate it eagerly. The instant he tasted it he forgot his mother, his grandfather, his home, his flock of geese, and, drawn by a power he could not resist, shook himself free and rushed into the procession among the elves. They laughed shrilly. The Fairy Prince leaned down towards

Conrad, took him by the hand, bade him mount by his foot, and in a moment had him before him on his horse.

The boy's mother and the old applewoman shrieked, and the grandfather called, 'Conrad! Conrad!' But he never turned his head. He neither knew nor heeded their voices. The pageant was now at an end, and the long procession swept through the Winegate into the country. Elfin horns began to blow, and Conrad's heart answered to the sound as an elf's heart answers. For human love was dead in him, and he did not know his own home when he rode past with the Fairy Prince, eating fairy fruit from his golden dish.

A great crowd out of the Red Town followed, shouting and crying, 'Stop! stop! Give us back Conrad! Give us back Conrad, the poor widow's son!' But ever swifter rode the Fairy Prince towards the green hill whence elfin horns rang loud and clear. They could not overtake him, and stopped, panting and crying, on the road, Conrad's mother among them distraught with grief.

Then they saw from afar the green hill open wide, and a bright light stream forth, and into it the glittering procession trooped to a sound of wild

music. The last sight they beheld was Conrad standing high on the Fairy Prince's saddle-bow waving his arms above his head. Then the light went out, the music ceased, the hill closed its green gates upon them all, and Conrad was lost for ever.

Carl and Carlo.

Even the oldest man hath once been young,
And his bald head a curly pate, empty
Within, but decked with lovelocks flowing free.
His temper, now grown cold and sluggish, then
Took fire at a word; his hand on sword-hilt
If but a look misliked him. Gentle sirs!
Remember youth is youth so short a time
You cannot long be angry with its faults!
The wrinkled grandsire crouching by the hearth,
Who wags a boding, disapproving head,
Was once the youngest in the company.

CARL and Carlo were twins so exactly alike that when they were born their mother thought there was only one baby and that she saw double. Two peas in a pod, two buttons on a shoe, two drops of rain, were not so like each other as the twin-brothers Carl and Carlo. They had the same features, the same curly dark hair, the same gray eyes, the same complexion. They were the same height and size, and walked so precisely alike that when you heard their footsteps you never knew which brother would come into the room. They had the same voice, the same laugh, and when they cried they made the same square mouth. Every little trick and gesture were common to each. They had but one smile between

them, and were as much alike as two coins stamped in one die.

When the twins were babies there was no means of knowing them apart. The family doctor suggested marking one of them on the tip of the nose for distinction's sake; but to this their mother would not consent. At their christening, a red ribbon was tied round Carl's arm to distinguish him from his slightly younger brother Carlo. But Carlo's nurse would have her baby decorated too, so she tied a red ribbon on his arm, and then there was fine confusion. They could not tell which child first had the red ribbon on it, and it was impossible now to be sure which was Carl and which Carlo. Indeed, the point was never really settled, and as soon as the twins could speak they taught the one to say, 'I am Carl,' and the other, 'I am Carlo,' and dressed the one in red and the other in blue.

The mother of the twins was young and beautiful. Their father, who was old enough to be their grandfather, was the most celebrated judge in Italy, of great repute for wisdom and learning, so that men came from far and near to seek counsel of him in every kind of difficult

matter. To each he gave his whole attention, and no honest man ever left his presence dissatisfied with his advice or decision. From the Duke who consulted him on the affairs of State to the angry fishwife robbed of a sprat while she turned her back on her stall, every one received words of wisdom fitted to his case, and went away praising the upright judge.

But the wisdom that guided a thousand strangers was not available for home use. There the judge was so absorbed in pondering difficult cases and taken up with weighty matters that he almost forgot that he was a husband and father and master of a great house. He spent his days in the Court of Justice, and when he went home in the evening he noticed nothing that happened there; and so long as his sons bade him good-night and good-morning he supposed they were well and doing well. As for his wife, in her difficulties with her household and headstrong boys, she was the only person who had neither counsel nor guidance from the wise judge.

When Carl and Carlo were bold and self-confident boys of sixteen, their likeness to each

other got them daily into trouble. As often as not their tutor caned the wrong boy for his brother's offence; and he gave a prize to Carlo for Latin, which was Carl's strong point, and a prize for music, in which Carlo excelled, to Carl, who scarcely knew a flute from a viol. This the twins did not mind; it was a good joke. They could exchange prizes and put things right between themselves afterwards. It was being punished for each other's faults that they resented.

The boys tried complaining to their tutor when he made painful mistakes with his pupils; but he was a gentleman of a hasty temper, and their efforts only made things worse. One day, for no reason at all, Carl felt obliged to be unusually troublesome and rude over his lessons. The storm brewing between him and his master broke when the boy grew insolently defiant. The two were alone in the schoolroom; Carlo was playing the viol in the gallery, and it was impossible the enraged tutor could be mistaken in the culprit. 'Ah! miserable that you are! I will fetch my cane from upstairs. I have forgotten it, but when I bring it down I will make you remember

it!' and he rushed from the room, leaving the door open behind him.

Carl slipped out into the gallery and said calmly to his brother, 'The signor wants you at once in the schoolroom, Carlo. He has only run upstairs after some rubbish or other he has left there. Make haste, or he will be there before you;' and he passed on towards the garden.

Carlo laid down viol and bow, and wondering what he was wanted for, went to the schoolroom. He was not left in doubt a minute before the angry tutor rushed upon him, a whirlwind armed with a cane, and rained a stinging shower of blows about him, back and front, head and shoulders. Carlo instantly realised that here was another and a worse case of mistaken identity, and while he fought hard he shouted, 'What do you beat me for? I tell you I am not Carl.'

'Do not add lying to your other offences,' roared the furious tutor; 'you were Carl a minute ago, and you shall be Carl still.'

With a mighty effort of all his strength, which was doubled with rage, Carlo wrenched the cane from the signor's hand and threw it out of the

open casement. Carl was listening outside in the garden; he caught the cane as it fell, and brandished it with an insolent laugh at the two red faces that quickly appeared at the window. 'Never mind, Carlo, I was beaten for you yesterday, and this makes all right between you and me;' and he nicked the cane with his knife and split it from end to end.

The tutor was about to leap out of the window in pursuit of Carl when the mother of the twins and two of her maids, alarmed by the noise, rushed into the room, flung themselves upon him, and dragged him back.

'Peace, signor, peace! You are too rough with your pupils!' said the lady. 'If the judge were at home he would tell you he does not allow such scenes of violence in his orderly house. I prithee, peace.'

'Lady,' said the tutor, 'if the noble judge were also a wise judge he would expend a little of his wisdom at home in overseeing the education of his children; but their father is so taken up with his judicial duties that he seems to forget his sons' existence. May he not be reminded of it some day by having to pro-

nounce sentence of death upon them in open court for acts of violence they were not taught to restrain!' And the tutor resigned his post and left the house.

When the judge came home weary and care-worn to supper, his wife took courage and told him how headstrong and disobedient the boys had become. But he gently waved her off. 'Do not disturb me with these schoolroom brabbles,' he said. 'My mind is full of a thousand important matters. The whole land seeks counsel of me. The Duke himself has bidden me appear before him to-night at the Palazzo to determine a weighty affair of State. If you want more tutors for our sons, get as many as are necessary. But it is vain to disturb me with these childish things. I must eat my evening meal in peace.'

Carl and Carlo grew into handsome, lawless young men, still so exactly alike that you could not tell the one from the other. They filled the house with noisy company. Every worthless fellow who twanged a guitar under a window by moonlight was Carlo's friend, and every boastful swashbuckler who had fought a duel was Carl's. When the judge came home to

supper in solemn state, the whole riotous crew, led by the twins, made for the tavern to spend the night in revelry, returning by daylight through the empty streets with wild shouts and bursts of music. Had they not been their father's sons they would have been haled up before him to answer for their disorderly conduct. But the citizens respected the wise judge too much to expose the lawless ways of Carl and Carlo.

Carl fell in love with a beautiful young lady, Signorina Lucrezia, daughter of a wealthy merchant in the city, and would take no denial; so that at length her father consented to their betrothal. The judge was as usual too much occupied with public affairs to attend to those of his own family, and his wife arranged all details of the young lady's portion and of her son's fortune with Lucrezia's father, and the business was settled to every one's satisfaction.

When Carl had urgently courted the signorina for several weeks, and seemed altogether to have turned over a new leaf, he began to miss the old wild freedom with his boon companions, and to envy Carlo, who could still come and go as he

pleased. Now, with both the young men, to wish for anything was to attain it at once if possible, and Carl went in search of his brother. He found Carlo in the garden among the orange-trees playing the guitar, rehearsing a part he was to take in a comedy.

'Carlo, stop fooling for a minute and listen to me. I must have a merry evening again in the garden and at the tavern, and you are to help me to get it. I have not had a sword in my hand these three weeks and more.'

'What, brother! are you already weary of the fair Lucrezia?' and he struck a few mocking notes on the guitar.

'Ask me no questions, Carlo, and I shall tell you no lies. But the fact remains that one cannot have a fencing-match or sword-play with one's lady-love, and I want both. And the light notes of the lute in my ear day by day are more cloying than a chorus at the tavern. I would not disappoint the lady, and she looks for me in the afternoon among the oleanders in her father's garden when the shade on the dial marks the fourth hour. Meet her for me, good brother; make use of the likeness between us to

good purpose. She will not know you from me, and it will set me free for an evening with my boon companions.'

'With all my heart,' said Carlo, who scented an adventure. 'But though the fair signorina will certainly take me for you, unless you tell me how to court her I promise you she will know my manner from yours. You might pay dearly for your evening's liberty if your proxy unwittingly offended her, and you lost both Lucrezia and the ducats. How would you have me behave to the lady?'

'That is a nice point to settle. Here's for your guidance, Carlo. Found your style on mine at its best. Be reverent to the lady, yet beware not to overdo it; be dignified but gentle, and show a tender courtesy towards her. Be ready with apt and pleasant stories, but none that smack of the tavern; be familiar, but not unduly so, for if you kiss but so much as her finger-tips I will break your guitar over your head.'

Carlo laughed. 'I thank you, good brother, for your instructions. It will go hard if I do not better them. 'Twill be good practice to learn

how to please a lady before I go courting on my own account.'

At four o'clock Carlo was in the rich merchant's garden, where Lucrezia and her mother and a few ladies sat in the sweet-smelling shade of the oleanders. He was received with cordiality by the gentle company. He kissed each lady's hand and was especially courteous to Lucrezia's mother, who treated him as though he were already a member of the family. She laughed and chatted and tapped him with her fan, and presently said, 'Good Signor Carl, will you go into the house and fetch my little dog? I cruelly forgot him, and left him shut up in my room.' Carlo rose with alacrity, though he knew not by which door to enter the house, nor did he know the signora's room or the name of the wretched little dog.

'Perhaps Lucrezia will come with me?' he said; and they crossed the wide garden together, talking and laughing merrily. The terrace door stood open, and they entered a marble-paved hall where were many instruments of music and trophies of the chase. Two doors led from the hall into the house, and Carlo went without

hesitation to the wrong one. 'Not that door, Carl; it leads to my brother Francesco's room. But hark! that is Lippo barking to be let out.'

'Then perhaps you will release the poor animal while I look at this beautiful *viol da gamba*. A finer instrument I have never seen;' and Carlo lifted it from the table where it lay with its bow temptingly beside it.

'It is the same that you have seen every day for a month past, Carl. My father brought it from Mantua, and there is no one here who can play it. Only yesterday you said what a musician your brother was, and what music he could draw from it.'

Then the door was opened and in bounded Lippo. The tiny greyhound ran to Carlo, sniffed about him suspiciously, then snapped at him and barked as if he took him for a burglar.

'No wonder poor little Lippo feels hurt,' said Lucrezia. 'Yesterday you gave him sugar; to-day you take no notice of him.'

'It seems to be Lippo's turn to take notice of me,' said Carlo, rubbing his leg where the little dog had tried to bite him; and he followed the

signorina into the garden, taking with him the *viol da gamba*. Lippo barked wildly and flew at his ankles every moment, till Carlo, under pretence of pacifying him, stooped to give him a pinch that sent the little fury whimpering to his mistress.

Lucrezia and her mother could not suppress their astonishment when Carlo, after tuning the instrument, played finely on the *viol da gamba*. At the first stroke of the bow they felt that they listened to a master. His beautiful music drew groups of servants from the house, and a row of heads and clinging hands appeared above the garden wall as an audience sprang up from the very stones of the street.

Lucrezia was charmed and unspeakably proud of her lover.

'You never told us, Signor Carl, that you were a musician,' said her delighted mother.

'Nor am I, signora. It is as the mood takes me. You have not seen me touch an instrument till now; it may be weeks before I do so again.'

Soon the merchant came home, bringing a party of gentlemen to supper, among whom were some

friends of Carl's, who rendered Carlo very uncomfortable by talking of persons and things well known to his brother but not to him. He could not be silent when spoken to, and he made so many blunders in the character of Carl that Lucrezia said, 'Carl, your memory plays you tricks to-night.'

Then Carlo, thinking music safer than conversation, asked for a lute, and sang the prettiest songs in a joyous baritone voice. Lucrezia, who till now had never heard Carl utter a note, marvelled that her lover had so modestly hidden his accomplishments.

At parting Carlo lightly kissed her hand; but as Carl kissed her on brow and cheek both at coming and going she was grieved, and thought that his affection was growing cold.

Carl besought his brother for three days to go in his stead to visit the signorina. Carlo warned him it was a dangerous game, and that he must not blame him if he (Carlo) fell in love himself with Lucrezia. But Carl insisted, for he was pledged to take part in a contest of arms the merchant disapproved of so highly that he must not know that his daughter's lover was the leading spirit

of it all. And another thing, his purse was empty, and he must have a couple of nights' play and win some money at cards, for he was ashamed to ask his mother for more.

The brothers struck a bargain. Carlo would continue his visits to the lady if he might afterwards join Carl at the tavern, for he too wanted money and perhaps would be lucky at play.

The first night all fell out as they wished. Both won a pocketful of gold and they expected still better luck to follow. The next night, to their annoyance, Lucrezia's brother Francesco entered the tavern, and seated himself by them at the gaming-table. Carl particularly disliked meeting Francesco there, for he would tell them at home where he had seen him, and his parents would be more severe with their prospective son-in-law for gambling than with their own son. The merchant had no notion of his daughter's portion that he had worked so hard to accumulate being lost at play, and he often shook his head and observed that 'dice squander ducats.'

Francesco proposed that he and Carl should play for very high stakes, and Carl readily consented.

At first Francesco won and became boastful and insolent. But the luck soon turned, and Carl carried all before him. No fresh shuffling of the cards made any difference. Francesco tore his hair and dashed his gold pieces on the table, and Carl triumphantly added them to the growing heap of money he had won. Again and again Francesco lost till he was beside himself and behaved like a madman. He sprang up, flung himself over the table, clutched at the ducats he had lost, and was sweeping them into his pouch when, lightning-quick, Carl flashed out his dagger and pinned Francesco's hand to the board.

Then all was wild uproar and confusion. Swords were drawn, the table overturned, lights quenched, and gold pieces flung about that no one had time to pick up, for the city watch already battered at the tavern door, and the riotous guests escaped for their lives from the back of the house. Carl and Carlo managed to evade pursuit and reach home in safety, by running cat-like over low roofs and along garden walls.

The brothers let themselves quietly into the house, and while they were still panting and breathless, their mother, carrying a lighted taper,

came downstairs and beckoned them into her room.

'What riotous mischief have you been in this night, unhappy boys? A mother cannot guide unruly sons, and your father neither checks nor corrects you. Much you are to be pitied as well as blamed;' and the lady wept, and her sons kissed her hand.

'And what foolish trick are you playing between you with the Signorina Lucrezia? See, here is a letter I have had from the signorina's mother, telling me they have only now discovered what a musician you are, Carl—you who do not know one note from another. But since they have heard you play in masterly style on the *viol da gamba* —you, Carl, who do not know a *viol da gamba* from a wheelbarrow—Lucrezia's parents are about to have a musical *festa* in your honour. They have invited their friends to the number of a hundred and fifty to hear you perform in their house on Monday next.—Carlo, this is your work,' and the lady pointed at her younger son, who was shaking with laughter. 'You have been masquerading as your brother, and made the signorina and her family believe that Carl has accomplishments he

does not possess. Your foolish joke may lose your brother his lady-love and disgrace you both in the city.'

Carl's face was red with passion, and he turned to Carlo. 'This is intolerable! So you have made them think I am a musician, and they will find out that it was you and not I who charmed them all. My mother is right; your vile vanity and love of showing off will cost me a wife!'

'That is not to-day's trouble,' said Carlo. 'You had better tell our mother everything.'

And the brothers made a clean breast of it, winding up with the story of the tavern brawl, from which they were still hot, and the violence done to Lucrezia's brother.

'O wretched boys! deceivers, gamesters, brawlers! what shall I do with you or for you? Any poor woman may ask counsel of the judge my husband, and be wisely advised, excepting only his own wife. I have thought what I will do! I will disguise myself and seek an interview this very morning, and put my case before him as a stranger's. And then, my sons, you must abide by your father's advice whatever it be, for there

is not an hour to lose. By noon you must both be far from here.'

Early in the morning their mother darkened her face, wrapped herself in a great mantle, and threw a thick veil over her head. She bade a servant tell the judge that a lady travelling from a distance urgently begged speech of him before he went into the court, and ask by his favour might she see him alone? It happened to the lady as to other suitors. She was shown at once into the audience-chamber, where the robed judge sat, courteous and dignified, with all his wisdom and experience at her disposal. She bowed deeply before him, and was so overawed by the majesty of the judge in his robes and cap, and by his pale, still face like a marble effigy on a tomb, that she never thought, 'That is my husband, whose stockings I have darned for years!'

'Speak, lady, and of your courtesy be brief, for many cases await me at the court.'

His wife clasped her hands under her long veil and spoke in a low, clear voice.

'Most learned judge, I bring no complaint to lay before you. I crave your counsel only in a case of much perplexity, wherein I have none to

help me or advise. I do not give my name; it is my honourable husband's, and therefore held sacred and secret by me, for I am here without his knowledge.'

'Proceed, gentle lady. I ask no more than you are willing to reveal.'

'I am the mother of twin-sons, most learned judge, youths of twenty years of age, brave and good-hearted; but their father, alas! is so taken up with his affairs of business, conceiving them to be his sole duty, that I am left by him like any poor widow woman to guide our sons alone. And they grow lawless and rebellious under my weak rule. Vicious they are not, most noble judge; but being unbroken colts, they jib, and wanting a father's strong hand, take the bit between their teeth.'

Then the lady told the judge plainly of the peril her sons were in through their foolish conduct, withholding nothing but their names and those of their companions. The judge listened to all attentively, regarding her with grave unrecognising eyes. Then he spoke:

'Lady, the burden laid upon you is heavy, and unmeet for your tender sex. If a mother rules

her sons with a man's authority she forfeits their love, and with that her influence. The responsibility of your sons' ill-conduct rests with him who leaves you to do his duty towards them. Clearly the young men must be parted at once. They egg one another on to evil-doing, and the great likeness between them tempts them in their frivolity to unworthy deceit, to wild and youthful pranks. They love not learning, and are too old and ill-regulated to be sent each to a university to study law or letters. Their high spirit and hot blood, methinks, fit them to be soldiers, and in the camp and field, lady, they will find the discipline they crave, and the chances of distinction that men prize. Send one, therefore, into the Duke's army, and one into the army of the Venetian Republic. Deal liberally with the young men. Give to each an income ample for all honourable needs, that neither poverty tempt them to play the courtier to rich men nor too much command of money lead them into loose and spendthrift living. If the merchant, father of the Signorina, seeing how one of your sons has deceived him and the other has assaulted his son, refuse to give his daughter to your elder son,

be not haughty, but submit to his terms. Compromise with him that your family be not disgraced, and despatch your sons without delay. When your lord returns from journeying tell him you have acted on my counsel, and may God give you joy of your sons eventually!'

'I thank you, most noble judge! Had my husband spoken such words of wisdom to me years ago, my sons had not been what they are to-day!' and she left the judge dimly conscious that he had heard the lady's voice before, though where he could not remember.

The lady promptly decided Carl had better be sent the farther from home. She gave him a purse full of gold and a good horse, and bade him set out for Venice, while the younger twin was sent to offer his services to the Duke. But Carlo had not reached the palace before he was set upon in the open street by Francesco and a band of his father's servants, disarmed, bound, and hustled through a back alley into a leafy corner of the merchant's garden. There they flung him on a marble bench, and left him with Francesco, whose wounded hand was swathed in bandages.

'What is the cause of this unhandsome treat-

ment?' asked Carlo angrily. Francesco glared at him. 'I have brought you here to avenge last night's outrage, the dagger-thrust that has lamed my sword-hand.'

'The dagger that did it did well! The hand that is stretched forth to cheat and steal is unworthy to bear a sword, and it was a righteous deed to lame it on the spot. You, Francesco, of all men should be silent about the events of last night.'

'Ha, Carl! you would not dare to use such language if I were not maimed, and when my hand is healed I challenge you to single combat. We will settle this question at the point of the sword!'

'I will fight you with all the pleasure in life, though I am not nearly so good a swordsman as my brother Carl, for whom you appear to take me.'

'Do not think to deceive me and escape death by lying! The likeness between you brothers is extraordinary, I admit; but it is impudence to make-believe I do not know the rascally face of the man who stabbed me only a few hours ago!'

'Nevertheless I shall prove it to you that I am Carlo and not Carl, and you will have two duels to fight instead of one. And now loose these cords your cowardly servants have bound me with.'

Francesco laughed fiercely.

'Shall I be fool enough to let you go when I have you at my mercy? This much favour I will show you: lie here pleasantly under the shade of the trees while the surgeon dresses my hand indoors. Then I will return with my men and see you carried into a dark cellar, where I shall leave you like a treasure under lock and key.'

'Miserable coward! that dare not speak to me till you have me helpless and bound like a *bambino!*'

'*Addio!* Do not shout when I am gone, or my men will come and carry you away at once;' and Francesco struck Carlo insolently on the cheek, and left him bound hand and foot.

No sooner was Francesco gone than Carlo heard a rustling in the bushes, and Lucrezia darted out from among the roses and flung her arms about his neck.

'O my beloved! is this how my cruel brother treats you? My maid has told me of the insults showered upon you, and I have come to set you free;' and with a sharp knife she cut the cord that bound him, and Carlo started to his feet. 'Francesco intends to kill you this night, but follow me quickly through the thicket to a private door, which I will open, on the opposite side of the garden;' and she seized him by the hand. 'Quick! I have come to save you!' and they crept along out of sight under the trees.

'I was hiding among the roses, and I heard you say you were Carl's brother and not Carl himself. Francesco would have it so when you played the *viol da gamba* and sang so finely. Oh! I never loved you so well as when I found you were a musician, and that you were Carlo and not Carl. Tell me the truth. Are you indeed Carlo?'

'Thrice fair and kind Lucrezia, would that I could deny it if you wish me to do so; but I am Carlo. Carl sent me to you in his stead, and it was not your betrothed that played and sang to you, but I, who pretended to be my brother.'

'How dared Carl deceive me? But I cannot blame him, nor must he blame me that I love his

brother as I never loved him. Fly, my Carlo, fly! God give us a happy meeting soon!'

'Amen to your prayer, lady!' and Carlo kissed the hand that pushed him from the garden through the half-opened door.

Carlo hastened home again to his mother two hours after bidding her good-bye. She looked up from her embroidery as he burst into the room laughing aloud, and asked, 'Which of you is it come back again like a bad coin?'

'It is Carlo, to be sure, and all my luck has turned at once! Lucrezia loves me instead of my idiotic brother! My music and his rashness have done that for me, so now if you will go to her father and disentangle the skein to his satisfaction, I shall marry the lady before I turn soldier, and my fortune is made;' and Carlo told his mother of his adventures with Francesco and Lucrezia.

The lady put on her hood and went to see the merchant, and lost no time in explaining everything. On the whole, the merchant preferred Carlo to Carl for his daughter's husband, for was it not Carl who had stabbed Francesco? And his son had behaved so ill that the less said about it the better. When the

lady complained of the monstrous usage Carlo had met with from Francesco, he merely observed that his son had mistaken him for his twin-brother Carl; and as the threatened violence was not meant for him, no harm was done.

'And now, my son,' said his mother to Carlo, 'it is right that Carl should know he has forfeited his bride through his own folly, and that you have played and sung him out of wife and fortune. He may see some lady elsewhere whom he would like to marry, and thinking himself still bound to Lucrezia, may lose them both. Here is a purse full of gold; take a good horse from the stables and hasten after your brother.'

Carl had set out cheerfully on his journey that morning, imagining he intended to go to Venice. But he could not keep to the road for an hour, and turned aside after everything that seemed to promise diversion or adventure.

He fell in with a company of strolling players, and stayed to act with them in a barn. He met with wandering jugglers, learned their tricks, and took part in a performance with them in front of a village inn. If he saw a wedding by the way he stopped to dance at the feast and to drink the bride's health;

and if he was lucky enough to come upon an execution, he wasted the morning waiting by the scaffold to see how they managed these things in country places. As for fights and quarrels, he rushed into them with all his heart, and gave and got many a hard blow. For the present he thought no more about soldiering, and had never enjoyed himself so much in his life.

For several weeks Carl followed his nose as his only guide, till he wandered out of Italy and found himself in the capital of a little German kingdom. Here his horse fell lame, and he was obliged to put up at an inn, where he led his faithful beast into a good stable, bathed and bound up his fetlocks, gave him a bran-mash, kissed his soft nose, and went out into the town on foot in search of adventure.

Carl walked through many narrow streets till he came to a great open *platz* where was a fountain that cast up a column of clear water like a glass rod, which broke into a spray of diamond-bright drops that fell glittering on the grass. On one side of the *platz* was the Cathedral; on the other the King's palace, a long building with a high-pitched red roof. From the front entrance a mournful pro-

cession issued of gray-bearded men clad in black, with huge books under their arms, and carrying black silver-mounted sticks; and the passers-by shook their heads dolefully at the sight.

Carl turned to a countryman standing near him, and asked, 'Prithee, who may these reverend fathers be?'

'Why, master, they are the renowned physicians who, after many years of vain endeavour to find a remedy for the King's long-standing malady, have at length decided it is incurable. They are leaving the palace, many of them for distant countries, and it is now God help the King! for the doctors can do nothing for him. It is not for want of good fees either, or of a splendid reward to the man who shall restore the King to health.'

'What is the reward?' Carl asked eagerly.

'Neither more nor less than the King's daughter in marriage; and after the King's death her doctor-husband will be King-Consort and meddle in State affairs to his heart's content.'

'That is indeed a princely reward. And what may the King's distemper be?'

The countryman shrugged his shoulders. 'Nay, that is more than a plain man can tell. How

should I know when all the physicians in Europe cannot give it a name? But this much I can swear to: since the King lost his beautiful young Queen, seven years ago, he has never been out of doors to breathe the fresh air; and he a mighty hunter, too, before this grievous trouble befell. They say he has lain in his bed till his beard has grown to his knees, and nothing and nobody, not even the Princess Hildegarde herself, can persuade him to rise or even to have the window opened. The kingdom is ruled by the Lords of the Council—that means the Baron Wolfram mainly—and they do what they like with us; and the King counts for no more than his dead forefathers lying in the Cathedral there. Not a thing has the King done in seven long years but sleep and eat his food, and plenty of it, too, they tell me. What would become of the world if we poor folks were free to follow our fads and take our sorrows in this way? When my good Trudchen died I could not afford to lie by and mourn. I had to get the children bread, and follow the plough while the north wind froze the tears in my eyes.'

'Well, my friend,' said Carl, 'the King's case as you state it sounds by no means hopeless. Look

you here, I will hazard a prophecy. A cleverer physician than any that have yet seen the King will shortly arrive, and in a few weeks from now will have the King up and shaved, and that long beard of his lining the crows' nests!'

That night one of the foreign doctors slept at the inn where Carl was staying, and they supped together. The doctor was returning to Italy a disappointed man, his skill baffled by the King's strange malady, and his ambition of marrying the Princess frustrated. When Carl talked with him in his native Italian, and wine had loosed his tongue, he told his companion the exact state of the royal patient, and how things went in the palace. The doctor was a poor man, and had hoped to cure the King and make his own fortune. He hardly knew how to meet the expense of the journey back to Italy.

'I can help you to travelling-money,' said Carl. 'Sell me your doctor's robe and cap and silver-mounted stick. You won't be riding in them, and I will give you a good price for them.'

'Of what use can a doctor's robe be to you?' asked the physician.

'I have a mind to go masquerading in it in a

farce, and if you don't care to part with cap and gown outright, what say you to letting me hire them till my frolic is over?' But the Italian doctor, knowing how old and shabby they were, preferred to sell them, and pocketed Carl's ducats with much content.

As soon as the doctor had set out on his homeward journey, Carl bought a big old Latin book and a crystal globe for divining. He put on the black fur-edged robe and cap, and hung a pomander in a perforated silver box from a chain round his neck, to protect him by its scent from plague and infection. He stocked his pouch with vile-smelling drugs and herbs, and put on a false gray beard. Then, with book under his arm and silver-mounted staff in hand, he went to the palace and knocked loudly at the door.

Carl announced himself as the Signor Medico Bravura of the celebrated school of medicine at Padua, bringing an infallible remedy for the King's malady, and he demanded speech with the Baron Wolfram.

Carl was shown into a small room almost filled by the cheerful presence of a big middle-aged man with frank blue eyes and reddish beard and

moustache. The Baron was dressed for hunting, and was stooping to buckle his hound's collar. When he had fastened the strap to his satisfaction he looked up at his visitor with a very red face.

'So, signor, you are another of the famous doctors, come to show us how little you know of the healing art. If I could not drench my hound here to better effect than the physicians have dosed the King for seven years past, set me down for a man who does not know his business.'

Carl bowed gravely.

'Sir, it is possible the King's ailments are more dangerous and obscure than those of your hound. There are maladies that defy human skill, as the greatest physicians readily admit. Can you tell me how the King is affected?'

'Now you come to the point, signor. I have told the history of this strange disease to the doctors once a week for seven years past, and nothing has come of it yet. But I must tell it as often as I am asked to do so, for it is an old saying and a true, "Where there is life there is hope."'

And the burly Baron told Carl much the same story as he had heard from the countryman in the

platz: how the death of his Queen had almost upset the King's reason, and turned an active, courageous man into a spiritless, bedridden invalid. Numberless doctors at home and from abroad had attended him, but all to no purpose; and the Baron wound up with, 'If you care to know my opinion, you can have it in four words: the King is mad.'

'Then I do not despair of curing him,' said Carl, 'for I have had a long experience of madness.' He thought to himself, Have I not lived twenty-two years with my madcap brother? 'But before seeing the patient I beg you to tell me what is the reward awaiting the fortunate doctor who shall cure the King.'

'The reward is great, because the service to be rendered is great. If you can indeed cure the King in body and mind, hale him out of bed and set him on his feet, wind up his brain (that is like a clock run down), and make it go properly and tell the time of day—the Council has decided that the man who can do this shall marry the King's only child, the Princess Hildegarde, and have a royal portion with her.'

'I accept the terms, Baron. But will the Princess be willing to marry an elderly physician?'

Wolfram laughed aloud.

'I will tell you what the Princess herself says: "Hang me or marry me; it's all one to me so long as you cure my dear father!" Not complimentary to the bridegroom perhaps, but a good heart speaks there.'

'It cannot be attractive to a young maiden to be married to an old gray-beard,' said Carl.

'Signor Medico, though you have an old man's beard on your chin, you have a young man's eyes in your head,' said Wolfram, looking at him closely.

'Credit that to my skill, Baron, for I have some little knowledge of the art of preserving youth. And now I beg to be allowed to see the King alone, to enter his room unannounced, and to pursue my own method in the treatment of his disease, however strange and even wild it may appear.'

'As for that, signor, if you use stranger or wilder means than scores of doctors before you, you will deserve to be crowned with straw like a madman. You see I am not hopeful; but I will take you to the King's room, and you shall have your own way entirely; and Heaven grant

you more success than your forerunners have had!'

Carl followed Wolfram along a tapestried gallery, at the end of which was the King's chamber. He left him at the door after saying, 'We knock thrice softly, and if we hear no growl from within, which means "Go away," we enter, and close the door behind us.'

Carl at once disobeyed the Baron's instructions. He knocked loudly six times, and when he was answered by a growl, instead of going away he promptly entered the room, leaving the door wide open behind him.

The King was so angry and surprised by the unceremonious entrance of the stranger that he did what he had not done in seven years, turned over in bed and said in a loud voice, 'Shut that door!'

Carl took no notice, but he observed with pleasure that the King's lungs were sound, and that he had not lost the use of his limbs. He went straight to the window, and after a struggle with the stiff fastening and hinges, flung the casement wide and let the sweet air blow through the room. Then the royal invalid grew furious and

used most unexpected language, and Carl smiled to think how a king in a passion has no more dignity than any one else in a passion. He made no reply, but quietly shut the door, while the fresh air from the open window penetrated every fusty hole and corner of the room. The King was red with rage, and tore hanks of gray hair out of his long beard spread over him like a counterpane.

'Who are you that have dared to enter my room unbidden, and open the window that has been shut for seven years?'

Just then the palace clock struck twelve. Carl listened to the last stroke with upraised hand, turned to the King, and said in a voice of authority, 'The hour of your deliverance has sounded! The days of your mourning are ended! The seven lean years are fulfilled; the seven full years have now begun. Therefore, O King, I bid you rise, wash, dress, and cut off that beard more becoming the grandfather of goats than a mighty monarch, and once more play the man!' And he waved his silver-mounted staff over the bed.

'No one has dared to speak to me as you

have done,' said the King, puffing angrily. 'I may be frail and bedridden, and I may have a beard that excites your feeble scorn; but I have also an executioner who would strike off your head at a word from me!'

'May my head roll in the dust, sire, if I do not shortly restore you to health! I shall do for you what no learned doctors have been able to achieve. It is written in the stars that I am to raise you from this bed of sickness before the crescent moon waxes full!'

The King listened puffing, but not so angrily as before, and, tired with the unusual efforts of mind and body, fell fast asleep. Then, with a sharp pair of scissors, Carl cut off twelve inches of his tangled gray beard, and felt he had made a good beginning. He had roused the King from a state of apathy into a tearing passion, so that he bounded about in bed instead of requiring four men to turn him over, and had broken a long silence with angry shouts and words. Clearly the King had a good reserve of strength, and was neither deaf nor dumb. His outburst of temper sent the sluggish blood coursing through his veins, and the unwonted exertion ended in

healthy sleep, in which, without knowing it, he filled his lungs with fresh air from the open window. He woke to find the strange physician standing by his bedside holding in his hand the King's favourite dish for supper. For Carl and the Baron Wolfram had agreed that the treatment must not all be discipline; the King must be coaxed and amused like a sick child. Carl told him tales of his own invention to make him laugh, or pretended to translate them out of the big Latin book he had brought with him. When he grew tired of spinning them out of his own brain, he fell back on true stories of his and his brother's adventures. The King's progress was slow at first, but he did not object to having the Italian physician with him day and night.

'Sire, you will soon be up and walking about, and even out with the hounds,' said Carl confidently.

'I doubt it, and in truth I am content to stay where I am. What makes you so sure that you will cure me?'

Carl took the crystal globe from his wallet. He held it where the light fell upon it and

made it look like a full, shining moon. He gazed into its luminous depths intently.

'Sire, it is not for me to gainsay what I discern within this crystal ball. I see the King with Baron Wolfram hunting the wild-boar. I see him mighty and robust, with sevenfold strength after seven years of rest, and his beard short and well kept as a young man's beard. The vision fades away in mist; but through its folds I see your form again in perfect health and majesty; I see you now in state surrounded by your great lords. The crown is on your royal head, and it becomes you better than the night-cap that so long has dimmed your splendour.' And Carl saw that the King was deeply interested, and he carefully replaced the magic globe.

'Bring me a looking-glass!' cried the King; and as he looked in it he said, 'You are right, signor; a night-cap, even with a tassel on top, ill befits my majesty;' and he plucked it from his head. 'I have not so much as seen my crown for seven long years.'

'Then, sire, command it to be brought to you from the Treasury. Let your faithful lieges see you once more wearing the sign of regal

power; for if the king forgets he is the king, who shall blame his people if they forget it too?'

'Let the crown be brought,' said the King.

'Sire, if I am to see you as the King, permit me to cut off the straggling ends of ragged beard that desolate the royal chin. Your beard has repeatedly grown shorter as you slept and gained strength; let me, then, cut and trim it so that it may become one who wears a crown.' And the King consented, and bade them bring him not only the crown but the orb and sceptre too.

When the King sat up in bed crowned, holding the sceptre in his right hand and the orb in his left, he was so pleased with himself that Carl had to hold the looking-glass before him for a whole hour. He smiled and bowed graciously to his own reflection, then became calm and dignified, and ended by frowning heavily at an imaginary culprit. At length he exchanged orb and sceptre for knife and fork, and, still wearing his crown, ate a hearty supper.

'To-morrow, sire, if you will rise and put on your robes of state your appearance will be completely majestic,' said Carl.

'That is a most serious matter,' said the King. 'There must be a consultation of physicians before I venture on so grave a step as leaving my bed.'

'Sire, you have honoured me with your confidence so far; why distrust me now? Of what use have consultations been to you in your long illness? What have a dozen doctors squabbling with each other ever done for you that I, who understand your case, have not done much better? Will knocking a dozen wooden heads together strike out a single spark? No, sire; I shall consult about your case with no one but myself, and there will be no differences of opinion then to hinder your speedy recovery.'

'You think very highly of your skill, signor.'

'I do not contradict the King,' said Carl, bowing; 'but I insist that in a matter of such importance I consult no one but myself.'

'Well, well! I don't deny that you have done me good. And now leave me, for I am weary.'

Carl gladly left the King and went for a walk in the town; and whom should he meet at the corner of the *platz* but his brother Carlo, who had been travelling in quest of him for six long

'Are we not right, myself and I?' said Carl.

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weeks! At first Carlo did not recognise him, with a thick gray beard and dressed as a doctor of medicine; but directly he knew him he laughed so loud that Carl put his hand over his brother's mouth and bade him be quiet. 'You'll ruin all if we are seen together like this! I'm a great man here, a renowned professor from the school of medicine at Padua. Let us go to the inn where I am staying, and there you shall tell me your adventures and I'll tell you mine; they are worth hearing, I can promise you.' And in the privacy of his own room Carl heard with joy that his brother was to marry Lucrezia instead of himself; how the lady had fallen in love with him and his music; and how Francesco's furious conduct had brought about the happiest results for Carlo.

Carl in his turn poured out the long story of his adventures; of the important business he had in hand with the King, which was to make his fortune and give him the Princess Hildegarde for his bride; and the brothers laughed wildly together. 'I am better than all the learned doctors in Padua,' said Carl, 'for I have brought common-sense and uncommon impudence to bear on the case. They have all overlooked the fact

that the King has a mind as well as a body to be cured, and have drenched, blistered, pilled, and potioned the unhappy man as though he went on four legs instead of two. But I am on the right track with the patient now. I'm within reach of the goal, and I bet you my false beard I bring my royal bride home with me in a month from now, and our mother will make a lady of the Princess in no time; for while the King has lain in bed for seven years his daughter's education and manners have been neglected. She speaks with her mouth full, and you've no idea how hard it is to understand German spoken through bread and butter. But she's a good little girl; and when our mother has taught her how to dress her yellow hair she may even look pretty.'

Before returning to his patient Carl took Carlo into the town, and bought him a doctor's complete outfit exactly like his own; he then fully explained what he wanted him to do, and told him how lucky it was that he (Carlo) had come at the very moment to render him the greatest service. Carlo was full of joyful alacrity, and most willing and able to play into his brother's hand.

When the King woke in the morning he sat up, put on his crown before he washed his face or combed his hair, and prepared to have a regal day. Carl had had a state chair placed where the King could see it, and his velvet and ermine robes laid upon it; and on a stool near to it rested the orb and sceptre. By the bed a magnificent suit of clothes was temptingly displayed. Everything was ready for the King to rise and dress.

The day was as important for the physician as for the patient, and Carl hazarded all on one bold stroke. The King looked longingly at his royal clothes and robes. It was not lack of bodily strength that kept him from springing out of bed and dressing himself. It was the tyranny of old habit in the sick-room, where for seven years he had not been allowed to do anything without the doctors first holding a solemn consultation.

'Sire,' said Carl, 'your loyal people are waiting to hear that their beloved King has left his sick-bed, and is once more regally clothed. I have promised that a gun shall be fired and the bells rung the moment you are robed and seated

in your chair of state, that they may throng to the Cathedral to thank Heaven for your restoration.'

'Yes, yes, that's all very well; but how about the consultation of physicians?'

'Your Majesty, I have respectfully informed you I shall consult with no one but myself.'

'Then you condemn me to suffer here without hope of cure.'

'Not so, sire. I have said I will only consult with myself, and I will do so now.' The door opened and Carlo entered dressed precisely like Carl, with the same features, form, and movements—so precisely like him that the King cried out with fear as he looked from one physician to the other. Carl watched the King closely lest the shock should be too great, while he stood consulting with his double.

'Are we not right, myself and I,' said Carl, tapping Carlo on the breast; 'am I not right that the hour has come when the King is cured, and must rise and show himself a king?' and while the uncanny consultation was held the King bounded out of bed and dressed in furious haste with trembling hands.

'Sire, I need no longer consult with myself,' said Carl; 'a single word between us is enough;' and Carlo withdrew, leaving the King alone with the original half of his dual physician.

Terror acted on the King like an electric shock and a cold bath. He was convinced that he had to do with a wizard who divided himself into two men and became one man again without losing or gaining bulk in the dreadful process. He dressed in a flash, threw his robes about him, opened the door, and darted down the corridor, where he had not set foot for seven years. Baron Wolfram gave the signal, the gun was fired and the bells rung, and the people knew that the King had left his bed and put on his royal robes.

From that day forth the King's cure was complete, and so was his dread of the Italian physician. But the Baron made the King keep his promise, and he gave his daughter to the man who had cured him, with her large dowry counted out to the last groschen. The Princess wept bitterly when she was married to the grave, gray-bearded physician, who seemed to her older than her own father. But no sooner was the

wedding over than Carl tore off his false beard, took off the doctor's robe, beneath which he was beautifully dressed as a young bridegroom, and he and his bride led off the torch-dance together in the great hall.

When the King saw the Italian physician changed into a handsome youth he was more convinced than ever that Carl was a terrible wizard, and gave his daughter a flask of holy water to sprinkle on her husband if he suddenly turned again into an old man. But Carl laughed and said, 'Sire, it will take fifty years to effect the dreaded change in me, by which time the Princess herself will be so near my age that she will not mind having an old man for her husband.'

Carl and his royal bride reached home in time for the wedding of Carlo and Lucrezia. Then the mother of the twin bridegrooms told their father the judge she was the strange lady who had consulted him about their unruly sons, and she hoped that their wild days were now ended.

The judge laughed over his sons' adventures as he had never been known to laugh. 'I admit,' he said, 'that I have not perhaps ruled my

family as I should have done; but you cannot complain, dear wife, that our sons are not distinguished and fortunate men. It is my belief that the story of the lucky and adventurous twin brothers, Carl and Carlo, will be told in this city long after their father's fame as a judge is forgotten.'

The King and the Statue

There once dwelt in an ancient city an old man who had travelled far and wide, and laid up great store of adventure by land and sea; and every day he went into the crowded market-place, trying to make men listen to stories of the strange things that he had seen and heard in his wanderings. But each was taken up with his own business or pleasure, and could not waste his time on an idle teller of tales.

One day a rich merchant saw the old man seated in the midst of a crowd of boys and girls listening intently to every word that he uttered.

'Tis well you have at last found an audience, father, that gives you the hearing you crave,' quoth the merchant.

'Good sir,' replied the old man, 'there are no listeners like the young! Their generous hearts are free to enter into another's joy or sorrow; to them the world is still fresh and wonderful; they believe all and doubt nothing; they neither argue with me nor mock me, and I give them of my best. Will you not leave your merchandise for an hour, and, seated with these hopeful youths, listen to my story, and become once more a child among children?'

ONCE upon a time there lived a King named Ferdinand, and he reigned over the country of Montania. King Ferdinand was strong and courageous, and fair to look upon; a mighty hunter, and skilled in the use of arms. His father had been a wise and thrifty king, under whom his people were content and well-to-do. When he died he left coffers full of gold to his son, who squandered quickly what his father had put by slowly. King Ferdinand possessed every kind of wealth: castles and palaces full of pictures, statues, and jewels, and the beautiful inventions of man. He gathered about him the wittiest, gayest company in the land, and spent his time in feasting and making merry.

Ferdinand never denied himself anything that could be bought or stolen, and the more he had the more he wanted. Whether he hungered for wealth, land, or power, he could never have enough of the thing desired.

The King set about building himself twelve great palaces, although his father had left him more houses than he could live in or knew what to do with. But the new palaces were made on a plan of his own; and the people, weary with his love of war, were glad to see him busy with the arts of peace. The King was determined to have a palace for every month of the year. He built each in a style befitting the weather of the month he purposed to dwell in it, and on a spot warm in winter or cool in summer. Each palace stood in the midst of a great estate, for which the King first offered a fair price to the owner. But if he did not wish to sell the land, which perhaps had belonged to his family for generations, the King took it by force; the man lost his property, and got nothing in return for it.

The January Palace, defying the winter, faced due south, and was girt about by pine-clothed hills that screened it from the bitter winds. It was

built of warm red brick, with double doors and windows to keep out the cold, and high-pitched roofs which the snow could not lie upon. The sheltered courtyard was a huge hot-house full of summer fruit and flowers, with only a pane of glass between them and the frozen outer world; and the King would come in from sledging, shake the snow off his shoulders, and gather peaches and eat them with icicles hanging from his beard.

The palaces were in twelve different parts of the country, so that the King had constant change in travelling from one to the other. Each had a chase belonging to it, for the making of which villages and farms were destroyed, and never a day passed when King Ferdinand did not kill or maim some beautiful bird or beast.

The Spring Palaces were on the lower slopes of mountains, in the midst of meadows knee-deep in sweet wild-flowers. Silvery streams winding through the gaily-coloured fields ran beneath the palace walls, and the King sat in a balcony fishing with a long rod, and hooked many a basket of trout for supper.

The Summer Palaces were high among the mountains, where in the hottest weather cool breezes blew from the snow-covered peaks.

The Autumn Palaces stood one by the sea, and two in the heart of chestnut and beech forests, and all were beautiful within and without.

But the June Palace was to be the most beautiful of all, so that the eleven others should seem in comparison like humble cottages. Here, among other glories, was to be a great hall containing life-size statues of King Ferdinand's ancestors, from the foundation of the kingdom of Montania. The palace was of pink marble, and towered high on a porphyry rock overhanging the sea, so that, looking from its windows, you seemed to float between blue sky and blue water. Myrtles, oleanders, and roses grew in masses in the gardens, and the heavy fragrance of orange-blossoms blended with the salt freshness of the air. Doves fluttered and cooed among the leaves, and fountains played at making little rainbows in the sunlit spray of their leaping waters.

Here, if anywhere, the King might forget care; and in the delights of the June Palace King Ferdinand forgot that he had stolen the land it was built on, and banished the owners for life. He forgot that he had destroyed whole villages to make his hunting-ground, and that he had not

paid the workmen their wages, because he had spent so much money in furnishing the new palaces that his treasure-chests were nearly empty.

The King was resolved that the greatest sculptor in the world should be employed to make the statues of his ancestors, and he sent to the Greek islands for the famous Philemon to undertake the work.

Philemon had not long been married to a beautiful young wife, the daughter of a powerful magician, and had no wish to leave his own country, when King Ferdinand's messenger found him and brought him a letter from his master. As the sculptor was not the King's subject he could not command him, but he begged Philemon to honour him with a three years' visit, and all the sculptors in Montania should work under the famous sculptor to finish the statues of the ancestors within that time. The King offered Philemon more money than he could earn in twenty years in his own country, to be paid in three equal sums, one at the end of each year; and the King would also make him a Knight Commander of the Grand Order of the Wooden Truncheon. The sculptor made up his mind at once. He

knew that he could do the work better than any man alive, and the princely reward offered him would keep him and his wife and child in wealth as long as they lived. So he bade them good-bye with a heavy heart; but believing he was doing the best for their welfare, he set out with the King's messenger to Montania.

King Ferdinand received the Greek sculptor with great courtesy, and gave him a studio in the June Palace, where were already blocks of the purest marble waiting for him to begin his work.

'This marble has been quarried and brought hither at vast cost and with great pains,' said the King. 'Nature has done her part in providing material for the exercise of your skill; and now, Philemon, your chisel must put life into it and call forth the image of a man from this formless block, wherein lie hidden shapes of beauty, which only your soul can conceive or your hand execute.'

The King looked so pleased with himself, and spoke his little speech so well and with so excellent a manner, that the sculptor was charmed. He would willingly have carried the King's lineage back to the beginning of all things, and made

him a statue of Adam as the first of his ancestors, only that they must all be robed or clad in armour.

When the King left the studio the Lord Chamberlain entered to tell Philemon plainly what he was really expected to do. 'King Ferdinand has a troop of ancestors,' he said, 'all kings or reigning dukes. Among so many, of course, there are some tall, some short, some plain, some handsome, and one—low be it spoken—most unmistakably bow-legged. Him you will be careful to represent with legs unusually straight. The plain must be made good-looking, the good-looking very much so indeed. All must be strikingly like the King, though not so handsome, but as if for centuries the Royal House had been leading up to the perfect flower of manly beauty we behold in his present Majesty.'

Philemon looked at the Lord Chamberlain with a spark of laughter deep down in his eyes, and said, 'This is not the first time I have worked for a king. Yes, the statues of the ancestors shall be quite satisfactory;' and he fell to work.

King Ferdinand was unmarried, and his pride kept him so. He had never met a woman whom

he thought worthy to be his Queen. Many Princesses he had seen and rejected because they were not beautiful enough, and had thereby made bitter enemies of their fathers. He was too great a King to need an alliance with any other Royal House, and the one thing he wanted was not to be had —a Princess so lovely that she herself would be the most beautiful ornament in all the wonderful June Palace.

Hugo, King of the neighbouring country of Transmontania, had offered King Ferdinand his daughter the Princess Nosalba in marriage. Both countries would have liked the match, and there was a great going to and fro of messengers between the two Courts, so that it was looked upon as almost a settled thing. But the negotiations came to an end the moment the King set eyes on the Princess. She had an extremely long and large nose, and rather than marry such a nose he openly said he would live and die a bachelor, the last of the kings of Montania. Indeed, the King was quite rude. He said that he did not regard Princess Nosalba as a Princess at all, but as a very large and very long nose with a little lady closely following it; and that if he wrote her

life, instead of beginning, 'Once upon a time there was a Princess, and she had a very long nose,' he should more truthfully write, 'Once upon a time there was a very long nose, and it had a Princess.'

Of course some Court gossip repeated this to King Hugo, who went black in the face with rage, and took a solemn oath to be avenged on the King of Montania at the first opportunity.

One woman there was, and only one, who loved the King: an old peasant woman called Amma, who had been his nurse and foster-mother. The King was fond of her, let her use the familiar 'thou' in speaking to him, and had her taken with him in his household when he moved from palace to palace.

Often when the King was angry or weary he would go to his nurse's room, and, stretching himself on the floor, lay his head on her snowy apron, and bid her brush his hair, as she did when he was a child; and Amma brushed the thick dark locks and crooned an old song till the angry lines smoothed themselves from the King's brow. The old woman loved the King as a mother loves her grown-up son who is a bad man, ever

praying and believing he will yet turn from the evil and choose the good.

For a whole year Philemon and the sculptors under him worked without ceasing at the statues of the King's ancestors, though he had soon found that three years would be too short a time for the task he had undertaken. So far the King was delighted with his work, especially praising the statues of Hildebrand the Long-Toothed, and Pharamond the Bow-Legged. But only six statues were finished in twelve months, and so many ancestors still waited to be immortalised that Philemon feared he would not be allowed to go home at the end of the three years. The only hopeful thing was that the King said he would pay him on the following morning a third part of the large sum due to him.

King Ferdinand sent for the Treasurer next day to bring him two large bags of gold pieces. He looked grave, and said that the supply of money had run so low that it scarcely covered the bottom of some of the treasure-chests, while others had not so much as a brass farthing to rattle in them.

Then the King said, 'I will go with you to

the Treasury, and test for myself how low my stock of gold has fallen.'

The Treasurer led the King down flights of steps, and through three great iron doors into a vaulted stone chamber beneath the palace, where stood a row of iron chests, which in the late King's reign had been full of gold pieces. Ferdinand was very strong, and he clasped his arms about each chest in turn, and with knotted muscles and starting veins lifted them one after another clean from the ground. But when he came to the last, he could not stir it. He went crimson with fruitless effort, and the moisture poured from his brow.

'The only full one among them all,' said the King, kicking the iron chest. It gave out a dull sound. 'This will never do. I must surprise my people with some fresh taxes. I always put on more when the money-boxes get so light that I can lift them.'

When the King returned to his own chamber he was told that a famous Indian jewel-merchant was waiting to show him the finest pigeon-blood rubies in the world. A tall man, with coffee-brown face, clad in a green robe and wearing a white

turban, entered the room salaaming respectfully to the King. He then drew from his wide sleeve a shabby little box wrapped in old rags, opened it, and displayed three rubies the like of which were not in any regalia in Europe.

The King gasped with astonishment. 'By my father's beard! these be rubies indeed. All others are but pebbles of the seashore!' And the Treasurer knew that the King would spend his last gold piece and pawn his palaces to make the rubies his own.

For the King was insanely fond of precious stones, and would part with honour itself to possess them. He did so now, when in making up the great sum demanded for the rubies he paid the merchant the money due to Philemon, as well as much that he owed elsewhere. One of the dear-bought rubies was set in the clasp that fastened the plumes in the King's hat, the two others in the royal crown; and Ferdinand thought he had driven a rare bargain with the Indian merchant.

The King had broken his word, and the sculptor toiled on for months without saying anything. He had learned what had become of the gold pieces that should have been his, and

when the King came to see how the ancestors were getting on, Philemon looked with an evil eye at the red light of the ruby on his hat. The sight gave him courage to tell the King that he had now worked hard for him eighteen months, with no reward but promises.

Then the King grew haughty and ill-tempered. 'Philemon, I thought you were a gentleman!'

'Sire, you thought rightly! I am a gentleman, but a distressed gentleman; and I have twelve distressed sculptors working with me for your Majesty who have not received a ducat of wages among them this year and a half. They clamour to me daily for their pay; but having nothing myself, I am unable to help them in their necessity. If your Majesty will pay these men I will wait willingly for what is due to me.'

'Who would be a king?' said Ferdinand passionately. 'You are all alike, every one of you, all trying to get something out of me! One wants money, another land, a third a title, and for one man that I please I make a hundred envious.'

Philemon kept silence till the storm had blown over. Then he spoke:

'Let not the King be mistaken in me. I want no land but my native land, no honour but that of being a great sculptor; and the money I claim is no more than the King himself has promised me in payment of work duly and truly done.'

'I shall not forget that you distrust my kingly word. Tell your story to my Treasurer, and whether he can meet your demands or not, the work must go on, and at the same pace. As for your underlings, it is reward enough for them to be allowed to help in the decoration of the June Palace without my being annoyed by vulgar allusions to pay. One thing more, Philemon. I want some suitable inscription on the walls of the banqueting-hall. See to it, and choose words apt and fit.'

King Ferdinand now set about building a great theatre of the costliest marbles and cedar-wood for the performance of his dancers, mummers, and actors. But as he had not yet paid the men who dug the foundations of the June Palace, or those who built it, he could find no one willing to work for him. Then the King revived the old cruel law of enforced labour without

pay that Hildebrand the Long-Toothed, though a tyrant, had thought it wise to abolish; and a cry went up from the land when men were dragged from their fields and shops to work without wages for the King's foolish fancy. But Ferdinand was only the more set on having his own way, and he said, 'One against many! We will see which is stronger, they or I!'

While taskmasters, lash in hand, stood over the unwilling workers like the Egyptians with the Israelites of old, a terrible war broke out that put a stop to the building of the King's theatre. King Hugo of Transmontania, who had only been waiting his time to avenge the insult offered to his daughter Princess Nosalba by King Ferdinand, thought the moment ripe for action. He suddenly poured a great army over the mountain passes into Montania, fired the August Palace, and burned it to the ground. For two days and nights it served as a flaming beacon towards which every soldier and fighting man hastened to drive the foe back again into his own country.

King Ferdinand pointed to the towers of his palace wrapped in red flame, and heartened his

men. 'Think you if the enemy burn my palace to the ground he will spare the dwellings of you humble folk? I tell you he will burn your cottage homes like wisps of straw, and fire and sword will pass through the land. Let him follow me who would strike a blow for his home;' and he led them into battle. The King was the bravest man in the field, a very lion among rabbits. The war raged for months with frightful loss of life on both sides; and all this bloodshed because the Princess of Transmontania's nose was too long and large to please the King of Montania.

No sooner had King Ferdinand returned victorious from the war than he set about rebuilding the August Palace and finishing the great theatre with the immense sum of money he received as indemnity from the vanquished King Hugo. But the King of Transmontania, though beaten, lost neither heart nor spirit. He wrote to King Ferdinand: 'The gold I am compelled to send you to-day, I will compel you within a year from now to pay me back again with interest. As I can swear it by no greater thing, I swear it by my daughter's nose.'

King Ferdinand's coffers were now full of gold, and he squandered it all on his pleasures, and neither Philemon nor any one else received what was due to him. Bitter discontent broke out again when men had to work without wages and the army got no pay. Bands of discharged, penniless soldiers ranged the country, laying hands on everything not too hot or too heavy to carry away. Yet the King gave money without stint to dancers, mummers, and actors, who were of no use to the State, but who amused him and helped to ward off or lessen the fits of yawning that seized him when he was weary of himself and of every one about him.

After the King returned to the June Palace, Philemon had to wait long before he could speak with him. The sculptor's heart was sick for his home and country, even should he have to return thither empty-handed. When at length he was allowed to see the King he spread Ferdinand's own letter before him, promising Philemon yearly payment for his work, not one farthing of which had he received. The King was ashamed, and tried to hide it by being angry.

He asked if Philemon had finished the statues of his ancestors.

'It has not been possible to finish them, sire, for I have worked alone for a year and a half. The sculptors who helped me could no longer spend time and skill for nought. And now, sire, I entreat you to be as honourable as the poor sculptor who has strictly kept the terms written on this paper by the King's own hand. Pay me what is justly due to me, and let me return to my home and country.'

'I will neither pay you nor let you leave Montania till you have finished the last touch to the statue of the last of my ancestors,' said the King furiously; 'of that you may be sure!'

From that hour Philemon was a prisoner in the palace. His food was brought to him, and everything that he needed for his work; but he was never allowed to go out, and it was months before the King entered the studio again.

In the meantime, to comfort his heart and lighten his captivity, Philemon began to carve from memory a statue of his beautiful wife, whom he feared he might see no more. It grew in such beauty under his hand that Philemon

marvelled at his own skill. No one saw the statue but himself. It stood covered with a white cloth behind the statue of Sergius the Splay-Footed, and when Philemon had worked at the image of that monarch till he felt ill with the contemplation of so much ugliness, he would turn to kiss the slender white marble feet of his wife's statue.

One day when the King was staying at the June Palace, deafened with the song of nightingales and cloyed with the scent of roses, he mounted his favourite white horse, and, accompanied by his gentlemen, went for a gallop by the sea. The sands were beaten firm by the weight of water that thundered upon them, and the tide was going out quietly. Great blue waves with foaming crests raced up the beach, only to rush back again, like big bullies that threaten but do nothing. To-day Ferdinand preferred the squeal of gulls and chatter of jackdaws to the song of nightingales, and the fresh smell of the sea to the scent of flowers. Above him on the red rocks towered the beautiful June Palace, and the base of the cliffs was honeycombed with caves that might serve as

dwelling-places for men less ambitious than the King.

Ferdinand set spur to his horse and left his gentlemen far behind. The wind carried the sound of the dull stroke of hoofs on the hard sand, but horse and rider were hidden from sight by a mass of rock jutting out upon the beach. When the King outrode his company it was a sign he wished to be alone, and none dared follow him.

A couple of miles beyond the jutting rock was a cave sheltered from wind and sea, and safe above reach of the highest tide. In it dwelt a wise woman named Leporella, whom the country-folk held for a witch, for she was learned in the use of simples, and often foretold things that came to pass. Ferdinand did not know Leporella, though she was akin to his old nurse, who consulted the wise woman when the dark hour fell on the King and the medicine of the royal physicians was powerless.

Leporella was picking up shellfish left by the outgoing tide when she heard the hollow stroke of hoofs on the sand; and, looking up, she saw the King on his white horse. She threw

down her basket and ran towards him, crying out to him to stop. But the King looked straight before him and rode on. Then the old woman, running swiftly as a young maiden, came beside him, and seizing the bridle with all her force, almost threw horse and rider down. After a few plunging steps that dragged her along with it, the horse stood still, and Leporella, still hanging to the bridle, looked up at the King.

Ferdinand lifted his whip above Leporella's white head. She did not flinch, but said, 'Strike me if you will! A brave deed for a great King!' and he dropped his arm.

'You have played me a hag's trick! Are you so mad as not to know you might have broken my neck when you flung yourself at my horse and checked him?'

'Sire, a danger threatens you far worse than a broken neck, and I risked the lesser evil to save you from the greater. It is Leporella the wise woman who speaks. Not for your sake, O King! for I love you no more than others do: but for the sake of my kinswoman Amma, your nurse and foster-mother, who loves you as her own son, I warn you.'

'What worse thing can threaten a man than a broken neck?' asked Ferdinand.

'No worse evil, sire, for a man; but a thing worse than death may threaten a King.'

'Speak plainly, and tell me what it is, and I will be on my guard.'

'Nay, sire, I do not see it plainly myself. I but see it as a shadow that will surely cross your path. Unless the stars in their courses fight for you there must shortly happen that for which none will pity you, and instead of tears there will be laughter in the land.'

The King's face turned scarlet. 'Witch! hag! sorceress! do you dare hint that anything can happen to make *me* RIDICULOUS?'

'Sire, did I not say that an evil greater than death threatened the King? But here be words of warning given me to utter;' and the wise woman said slowly and gravely:

> 'Not hand of flesh shall thee undo;
> But hand of stone shall make thee rue.'

And Leporella returned to her shellfish. She had done with the King.

Ferdinand rode back to the June Palace and

told Amma of the wise woman and her mysterious prophecy, repeating to his foster-mother the rhymed words of warning. Old Amma was distressed that any danger, seen or unseen, threatened her beloved foster-son, though she rejoiced that it was not death, which she looked upon as the greatest evil. 'For after all, my King, laughter breaks no bones. And my kinswoman has warned thee. What said she?

"Not hand of—stone—flesh—
Not hand—not glove"——

What is it? Oh, my poor head, what a memory is mine!'

The King laughed. 'Your head is like a sieve, Amma. Listen to me; this is what the wise woman said:

"Not hand of flesh shall thee undo;
But hand of stone shall make thee rue."

That's how the rigmarole runs; and much good may her dark words do me, which even the old hag herself does not pretend to understand.'

'O my King! can it be that Leporella's words have anything to do with the statues of thy ancestors the Greek sculptor Philemon is making for thee? They have caused thee trouble already.'

'No, Amma; what can hand of stone do? Nothing. Hand of flesh truly might do me an ill turn, and doubtless Philemon would harm me if he could; but the wise woman said, "Not hand of flesh shall thee undo." However, tell Leporella if she prophesies further evil for me I will have her burnt in a tar-barrel, like the witch that she is;' and the King lay down with his head in Amma's lap, bidding her brush his hair while she crooned him to sleep; and he woke refreshed and soothed.

Then the old woman took the King's hand in her withered hands and kissed it, and said, 'Let not the King be angry with his old foster-mother for daring to speak; but Leporella's words make me fearful for him. O my King! were it not wise to make peace with Philemon? He it is that has wrought the hand of stone, and it were better he loved than hated thee.' And the King frowned and smiled and shook off Amma.

Philemon was finishing the statue of Sergius the Splay-Footed when he heard in the corridor the now unfamiliar cry of 'The King! the King!' and a great opening and shutting of doors and sound of advancing footsteps. Then the Chamber-

lain struck the studio door three times with his gold-headed wand. Philemon threw it wide open, and King Ferdinand entered. He made a sign that he wished to be alone, and his attendants withdrew.

The King and Philemon talked together with the utmost politeness. Each was dressed according to his rank and calling; Ferdinand in velvet and jewels after the manner of kings, Philemon in white linen as befitted a sculptor. Among the plumes in the King's hat shone the famous ruby for which Philemon had unwillingly helped to pay.

The King was well pleased with the sculptor's work since he had last visited the studio. He walked round the statue of Sergius the Splay-Footed, pausing to look at it from every point of view; then, with a downward glance at his own shapely foot, he said:

'It seems impossible that a man afflicted with such a pair of feet can have been an ancestor of mine, though happily you may see it was not hereditary. But whose statue have we here covered up so carefully? Philemon, you have worked like a galley-slave since I was last here. Is it the

statue of my jovial ancestor Roderick the Random? I always meant to have a statue of him set up in the market-place, with a fountain of red wine flowing under it on high festivals, quite in his own style. Now, off with his covering, and I will salute the king and the boon-companion of kings.'

'Sire, the statue is not, as you suppose, that of Roderick the Random, or of any of your renowned ancestors. It is wrought for my own satisfaction, and can have neither interest nor meaning for your Majesty.'

The King frowned. 'You have been working for yourself in the time that belongs to me!'

'Sire, you are my master; but you have not yet proved yourself my paymaster. I have not received a single ducat in your service, and the King cannot, therefore, have bought my time.'

'Philemon, you are a mercenary hound! Uncover the statue at once!' And Philemon loosed the cord that bound it, and the white covering slipped softly to the floor, revealing to Ferdinand's astonished eyes the faultless form of the most beautiful woman he had ever beheld.

'A goddess! a goddess!' he said, and bared his head before the statue.

Philemon sighed as he looked on the image of the beautiful wife he never thought to see again. The King could not withdraw his eyes from the statue, which seemed to breathe and almost to speak. The glorious head was slightly inclined forward; one hand was extended as a queen's when she receives homage; from beneath the folds of the marble drapery that clung soft and light as muslin a faultless foot advanced.

'Philemon! is this adorable creature goddess or mortal being?'

'Sire, it is a woman.'

'If it be the image of a living being I will make her my Queen! This is the ideal I have ever sought, yet despaired of finding. Away with your long-nosed Princesses! Away with struggling royalties who want me to wed their daughters to aggrandise themselves! Here I behold at last my Queen, my joy, the pride of my life!' and the King grew so excited that Philemon was afraid.

'Who is she?' at length he asked, when he could speak calmly.

'Sire, I may not tell you her name.' For Philemon was sure that if the King knew it was

his wife he would not scruple to make her a widow so that he might marry her himself.

The King looked at the sculptor with angry astonishment. He played with the hilt of his sword as one who longs to draw, but restrained himself, for Philemon alone possessed the secret the King would give his crown to learn.

'You may not tell me her name?' said the King haughtily. 'Who is it that forbids what I command?'

'Sire, I can make no other answer than that I have already given. Were the King to ask me every hour of the day, and every day of my life, the name of the fair woman, I should still reply I may not tell it.'

'Philemon,' said the King in a voice of forced calm, 'all doors open to a golden key. I will give you a million ducats for the lady's name.'

'I have not as yet seen a single ducat of the King's; but were a million or a million million of them forthcoming they would not draw from me the name of the lady.'

'Philemon, in those words of defiance you have spoken your death-sentence!'

'Sire, I know it. I have counted the cost;' and

Philemon took up chisel and mallet, and, in spite of the King's presence, worked at the splay feet of Sergius.

When the King was departing in wrath, Philemon courteously told him he had finished the inscription on the walls of the banqueting-hall, and he hoped that the King would be pleased.

That night Philemon wrote a long letter to his wife's father, the great magician, asking him to help him at once by magic means, as none other were available. His jailer, who pitied the Greek sculptor for the ill-usage he met with, and liked him for his pleasant temper, willingly sent the letter overseas to Philemon's home.

In the early morning, when Philemon was released from the locked room in which he slept, and entered his studio, he saw, to his grief, that the statue of his wife had been taken away during the night. It had been removed by the King's command to his own room, where he spent his time gazing at the image of the beautiful creature, the one woman in the world worthy to be his Queen, and who should be his Queen if that obstinate knave Philemon would say who she was. And as he could not worship the beautiful

being without any name at all, he gave her the feminine of his own name, and called her Queen Ferdinandina.

The King was so entirely taken up with the fair statue that it was days before he could tear himself away from its marble presence to visit the banqueting-hall. There, truly, was the inscription on the wall, as Philemon had said. The fresh gold letters of the words were so well shaped and clearly cut that they seemed to speak aloud. The King looked up at them and read, 'If thou givest thy soul the desires that please her, she will make thee a laughing-stock to thine enemies that malign thee;' and he remembered the wise woman and her veiled prophecy, and the words were hateful to him.

The King sent for Philemon and said angrily, 'Some things you withhold from me, and some things you thrust upon me; and those insolent words are such as may not be spoken to kings;' and he pointed to the inscription on the wall. 'Whence come they, and who had the hardihood to utter them?'

'Sire, they are the wisdom of the son of Sirach, from one of the Holy Books,' said Philemon.

Then the King changed the subject and said suddenly, 'What did you say was the name of the beautiful lady?' But Philemon would not speak, and the King ordered his hands to be bound, and he was led away in disgrace.

The June Palace was no longer the June Palace, for its namesake month was ended, and the King was overdue at the July Palace. But Ferdinand could not tear himself from the beloved statue of his Queen; neither dared he take it with him, lest harm should befall it by the way.

The summer nights had grown so hot that the King could not bear to be indoors, and he had the statue of his unknown lady-love brought into the garden among the fruiting and flowering orange-trees. Here, hour after hour, he gazed by moonlight at the lovely image till he thought the lips parted and smiles passed over the marble face. By day he sat in the shade of the trees spell-bound before the statue, sometimes clasping his arms about it and crying, 'Tell me thy name. And folk said the King was as mad as the hares he shot at the March Palace.

While Ferdinand was thus wasting his time, his enemy, the Princess Nosalba's father, made the best

use of his. His army had got over its defeat, recovered its spirits, and was eager to take advantage of the disorder and misrule in Montania to attempt a second invasion. The enemy poured into the country through the mountain passes, telling the people that when King Ferdinand married their Princess Nosalba every man's wages would be paid, taxes lightened, and wrongs redressed. Many of Ferdinand's oppressed subjects believed this, and joined King Hugo's army, which grew as it marched, as a snowball grows bigger by rolling.

Ferdinand was commander-in-chief of his own army; but he would not call it out though he knew the country was invaded, and none of his generals dared put themselves at the head of the troops without the King's orders.

While things were in this fearful state in Montania, Philemon's jailer brought him secretly a letter from his father-in-law the magician. In it he told him a charm to use with the beautiful statue, for his own safety and the King's confusion. He also said that if his presence were needed, he would not fail to appear in Montania at the right moment. And Philemon, though he knew in what

peril he stood, rested content with the magician's promise.

Poor old Amma beheld with dismay the King's growing insanity; when he kissed the hand of the statue she shuddered and tried to draw him away. 'Oh, be warned, my King, be warned! Think of Leporella's words, that "hand of stone shall make thee rue"!'

And the King said, 'Silly old woman! do you not understand? Must I keep telling you that my safety lies in the fulfilment of the first half of the wise woman's prophecy, "Not hand of flesh shall thee undo"? That is why I am not troubled by the invading army in my country; that is the hand of flesh that cannot hurt me! And as to "Hand of stone shall make thee rue," it can do nothing of the kind. Alas! alas! that it should be stone;' and he kissed the hand of the statue again.

Then old Amma cried; but suddenly wiping her eyes with her apron, she said, 'This is neither more nor less than magic, my King. Never wouldst thou dawdle here kissing the cold marble hand of a lifeless image while thy country is overrun by the foe if some evil spell were not at work.

Let the Greek sculptor be brought hither, and bid him take the charm away from his handiwork.'

'There is no magic in the statue but the magic of pure beauty,' said the King. 'Still, let Philemon be brought hither, and I will ask him yet once again the name of the one woman worthy to be my Queen, for to-morrow he must die.'

When the jailer unlocked the door of Philemon's cell he was white with fear; he had terrible news to tell.

'King Hugo's army is within a mile of the palace! We shall all be dead men before we can turn round! And our King, who last year led us to battle like a conquering lion, is at this moment in the garden playing the fantastic fool with the statue of the fair woman you made, that has driven him stark mad! Oh, we're lost, we're lost, and the King has sent for you now!'

Philemon showed neither fear nor astonishment. He smiled gravely and followed the jailer from the darkness of his cell through dim passages, out into the afternoon glare and heat of the garden. Old Amma met him, and said, shaking her withered finger in the sculptor's face as he blinked in the unaccustomed light, 'O sir, my lord the King was

never thus till your evil charm worked upon him in the statue! I wish it was broken up to mend the roads withal!'

Ferdinand stood by the beautiful marble figure, himself noble enough to have served as a model for a companion statue. His handsome face was clouded with anger. He did not return the sculptor's salute, but said haughtily, 'Once more, and for the last time, Philemon, I bid you tell me the name and dwelling-place of this queen among women;' and he waved his jewelled hand towards the statue.

'Sire, I answer you now as I answered you at first. I may not tell you the lady's name nor where she dwells.'

The King stamped with passion, and old Amma, unreproved by her master, cried shrilly, 'You have cast a spell on the image of the fair woman; take off the enchantment before the King is wholly undone, O miserable chipper of stone and spoiler of marble!'

Then Philemon drew near to the statue of his wife, and his heart went out to her as he looked in the dear face. He took her marble hand in his, and whispered in her marble ear the spell

her father the magician had taught him in his letter. The statue bowed its head, and a smile kindled on the perfect features. The King thought that the miracle of Pygmalion and the Image was being repeated for him, and was so utterly absorbed that he did not hear the shout and tramp of King Hugo's advancing host, to which the very ground shook.

The statue inclined its beautiful head a second time. The King was beside himself with joy. He sprang forward crying, 'She lives! the statue lives!' and was about to kiss the benignly extended hand when, swift as lightning, the delicate marble fingers closed on the royal nose, and held it in an icy grip.

Philemon laughed and said, 'O my incomparable father-in-law!' Old Amma shrieked, and the King ground out curses in his beard. He was in agony. The cold fingers had a giant's strength. His nose swelled with pain, and do what he would he could not move it a hair's-breadth.

'Philemon! murderer, monster! fetch your mallet and break off this marble witch's fingers, and set me free!'

'The force necessary for that would break your

Majesty's nose,' said the sculptor. 'I fear you must wait the statue's good pleasure to release you.'

Then the King roared aloud, and struck the statue with his clenched fists till they bled.

Amma had run into the palace for oil to pour over the royal nose, that the King might draw it from the grip of the cruel fingers. A whole bottle of salad-oil she emptied on the cold hand and hot nose; but the marble fingers only took a firmer hold, and Ferdinand shouted with pain.

'Oh! here comes my cousin the wise woman,' cried Amma. 'Perhaps she can help the King.'

Leporella had not hurried over the sands and scrambled up the rocks with any thought of helping the King. She had come to take away her kinswoman to hide in her cave, for the enemy's host would be in the palace directly But when she saw the King fast by the nose, and the all-powerful statue looking blandly down upon his mad struggles, the wise woman laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks.

'By my father's beard!' shouted the King, 'if ever my nose is my own again I'll smell out

all the witches and wizards in the land, and burn Leporella and Philemon in the first batch.'

'So thou shalt, my lovely King!' said old Amma, who, now that her foster-son was in trouble, talked to him as though he were a baby that had tumbled down and hurt itself.

Then Leporella dried her weeping, laughing eyes and said, 'Spoke I not truth when I told the King,

> "Not hand of flesh shall thee undo;
> But hand of stone shall make thee rue"?

Let the King repent him of the evil, and doubtless the Greek sculptor will remove the spell he has cast on the statue. Then the marble fingers will release the King's nose, and by the help of patience and a skilful leech it will be restored to something like shape, and be once more a serviceable, workaday nose.'

'Oh, kill that woman for me, some one!' said the King, with a kick and a stamp like a restive horse. 'But what's that noise I hear? Who has dared to order out my troops without my permission?'

'Sire, it is not the marching of your own men that you hear,' said Philemon; 'it is the invading

Swift as lightning, the delicate marble fingers closed on the royal nose, and held it in an icy grip.

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troops of the King of Transmontania. They are upon you now, and they find you a prisoner ready to hand.' And with a sudden blare of trumpets, King Hugo and his officers rode into the garden, and behind them a host on foot that trampled into dust every flower and shrub for a mile round.

The unhappy Ferdinand made a frantic effort to look round at the troop of riders, but only succeeded in twisting his eyes in their sockets till they hurt him almost as much as his nose. 'Throw a cloak over me!' he cried. 'Hide me! My enemy must not see me in my degradation!'

King Hugo drew up a few paces from Ferdinand, whom he regarded with the utmost bewilderment. He looked at the statue, which now wore a broad smile on its beautiful features, and at the richly clothed man performing strange antics before it, with his face attached in some unaccountable way to the statue's hand.

'Who and what is this madman kicking up his heels at us?' asked Hugo. 'We have seen nothing but heels since we entered Montania, for the people have everywhere run before me. But this man cannot run; his face is apparently

glued to the statue's hand.' And Ferdinand shuffled violently with both feet, and gave a tremendous fling up with one leg. 'Perhaps he is performing some ancient rite before the statue of a goddess;' and he beckoned to Philemon.

'Who is this man?' asked King Hugo, for he could see nothing but Ferdinand's back; 'and what is he?'

'Sire, he is your foe, the King of Montania.'

'Then,' said King Hugo gallantly, ''tis no wonder that I did not know him, for he has never before turned his back upon an enemy;' and he dismounted and drew near to Ferdinand and the statue.

Then King Ferdinand shouted, 'Kill me! kill me! I am conquered by magic; it has been no fair fight! Philemon the sculptor is a wizard, and Leporella the wise woman a witch. Kill me, or make them release me!'

King Hugo came close beside King Ferdinand to see for himself what was really the matter. When he saw the unhappy man's nose squeezed out of human shape by the marble fingers, and his angry, swollen face, he laughed till the garden echoed; and his lords took up the laugh, and it

spread like yawning, till all the army laughed, and the land shook with the laughter of ten thousand men.

'How about noses now?' quoth King Hugo; and Philemon asked Ferdinand if he remembered the inscription in the banqueting-hall.

Tears fell from King Ferdinand's eyes and flashed off his heated nose like drops of water from hot iron.

'Make what terms you will with me, King Hugo. I am at your mercy!'

Then King Hugo beckoned Philemon to his side.

'You are the Greek sculptor who has bewitched the statue. How soon can you release that unhappy man?'

'Not till you have made your own terms with him, sire; not till he has paid me all that he owes me; not till he has sworn before witnesses and signed a paper promising to rule with mercy, and no longer to oppress his people,' said Philemon firmly. 'When he has done and agreed to all this, my father-in-law, the wizard of the Greek isles, will come to the King's help.'

King Hugo turned to King Ferdinand, who was

now too much exhausted to kick or struggle. He could not be seated without pulling his nose off, and he was just too far from the statue to lean against it for support; his misery and humiliation were complete.

'Your pain will soon be ended,' said King Hugo cheerfully. 'My secretary will write my terms of peace, which you will sign when the Greek wizard arrives and sets you free.'

Ferdinand groaned. 'It is a week's voyage from the Greek isles, and I shall have been buried long before the wizard arrives.'

'Sire,' said Philemon, stepping forward, 'the wizard will land on the beach close to us as soon as you have agreed to all our demands. But if you refuse a single request he will not come at all.—Leporella, push your way through the tamarisks and look out to sea! Tell us, is there a ship in sight?'

The wise woman did as she was bidden, and, with several soldiers as curious as herself, looked out over the sea. They gave a cry of astonishment when they saw a small ship coming up in the teeth of the wind, and making straight for the shore. The vessel was shaped like a swan, with

white sails for wings; and when they described it Philemon said, 'It is the wizard's ship; he will be with us quickly.'

King Hugo dictated his terms, and the secretary wrote them in a book, dipping his pen in the ink-horn fastened to his button. First, the King of Montania was to restore every farthing of the vast sum he had wrung out of King Hugo the year before.

'Do you agree to this?' he asked King Ferdinand.

'I do,' he groaned.

'Secondly, you are to pay every expense of my present invasion of your country as though I and my whole army were honoured and invited guests. Do you agree to that also?'

'Yes, yes, if only the wizard will make haste.'

'Thirdly, you are to marry my daughter Princess Nosalba on the spot. I have brought her with me on purpose, and your immediate marriage will remove all cause of quarrel between us, and our two countries will enjoy perpetual peace. Do you agree to the marriage?'

'Never! never!' shouted the King, and he kicked furiously, first with one leg and then

with the other, till he cleared a circle behind him.

'If you refuse a single thing the wizard will put back to the Greek islands without landing, and none but he can save you.'

'Woe worth the day!' cried Ferdinand. 'If it must be, it must be! I had rather be shot than married! But all will soon be over; I am dying from the nose downwards, and nothing matters any more!' And at a sign from her father, the Princess Nosalba came forward with her ladies from among the rose-bushes. She was a kind and good-humoured little Princess; yet when she saw King Ferdinand fast by the nose she went off into peals of laughter.

Then old Amma broke out passionately, 'I wish the statue had you by the long nose, madam, instead of my lord the King!'

'Let one of the army priests be called to celebrate the marriage at once,' said King Hugo; 'and while he is with us King Ferdinand can take the oath to govern his people justly; to pay all arrears of wages that he owes; to remit the taxes he has cruelly imposed; and to send an order at once to the Treasury to pay the

sculptor Philemon every farthing he has promised him, and to have the money put on board the wizard's ship as soon as it arrives.'

While the King was speaking they heard the song of the Greek seamen as they cast the anchor, and Leporella, still on the lookout, cried, 'The wizard has come!'

So also had the priest, booted and spurred, hot from riding, with mud-splashed cassock. He started when he saw King Ferdinand fast by the nose, with his heels towards the company, and a grave smile passed over his sallow face.

'Master Priest,' said King Hugo, 'there is not a moment to be lost. For reasons of State I require you to marry my daughter to King Ferdinand at once.'

'But, sire, such a thing has never been seen as'——

'No; nor has such a thing as that ever been seen before,' said Hugo, pointing to the unhappy bridegroom. 'Everything that will happen to-day has never happened before, and will never happen again, so out with your book and marry the Princess to the King. Make the service short as a hunting-mass; leave out the fancy work, and

go straight to the root of the matter.' And the priest began promptly, 'Wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife?'

'Can any one lend us a wedding-ring for five minutes?' asked King Hugo, looking round.

Amma sprang forward. She drew from her withered finger her old wedding-ring like a circle of gold wire, and gave it to the priest. 'My master's bride is welcome to use that; it is only a peasant's ring, but it has been worn by a true wife.' And the wretched Ferdinand married the Princess with his foster-mother's ring, and his hand was guided to put it on her finger, for he could not see her nor stir a hair's-breadth from the spot.

When the priest pronounced them man and wife, the air shook to the roar of cannon, and the Greek wizard stepped through the tamarisks on the cliff, and appeared before King Hugo. He was tall and thin, with eyes like flame, and a white beard which hung to his waist. He was clad in a black robe, with the signs of the zodiac worked round the hem, and he carried a staff and wallet.

'Has King Ferdinand sworn to observe the

terms dictated to him?' asked the wizard, turning towards the group standing about the captive King.

'He has,' they all replied in chorus.

'For pity's sake release me! I am punished, tormented, humiliated!' groaned the King.

The wizard approached the statue, and with his wand touched the marble fingers. Before loosing their hold, they gave one last deadly wrench that pulled the King's nose out to the full length of his bride's, and he fell back fainting in everybody's arms.

'The King will never again be able to reproach the Princess with the length of her nose,' said the wizard, 'and it were better his name went down to posterity as Ferdinand the Long-Nosed than as Ferdinand the Unjust.'

Before the sun set, the wizard and Philemon, with the gold pieces Ferdinand had paid him at last, were safely on board the swan-ship, and Leporella with them at her urgent prayer, that she might learn more of the magic art. As the wizard needed not the help of wind or weather, they put out to sea in a great storm of thunder and lightning, so that all who saw them embark

believed their destination to be the bottom of the sea.

The King lay ill for many weeks, and his bride nursed him through his fever; and whenever he opened his eyes she was hovering over him like a kind bird with a very long beak.

During Ferdinand's illness King Hugo and his invading army left the country, and the people once more began to be content and prosperous. When the King recovered he was a changed character, for he said, 'It's absurd for a man with a nose like mine to be proud any more; I must think about being good.'

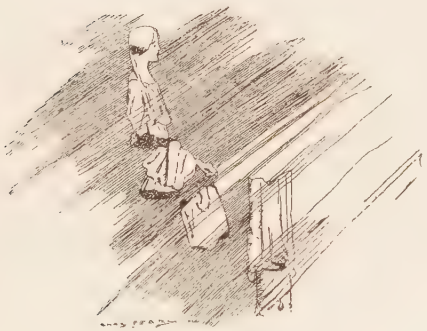
As he grew stronger the long-nosed royal couple walked daily in the garden, and their steps led them to the scene of their strange marriage.

'What has become of the statue?' exclaimed the King, surprised at a blank where it had once stood.

'My dearest, you remember nothing about it,' said Queen Nosalba. 'On the evening of our wedding-day, when you were insensible, there was a terrific storm. The statue was struck by lightning and dashed to pieces; and in the

morning I saw the men clearing away a heap of blackened fragments of marble.'

Old Amma had her wish. The enchanting and enchanted statue, after all, finished its astounding career as material for road-mending, and was ground to powder under the feet of men and hoofs of horses.



Hubert the Shepherd.

And do you think the lamb's young voice,
When bleating to his Ma-ma,
Is nothing but unmeaning noise,
Of oft-repeated Ba-ba?
Oh no, he speaks the sheep's own tongue,
Though in a lisping lamb's way;
But when he's lived old ewes among
He'll speak it in his dam's way.

HUBERT was a shepherd-boy, and tended his father's flock. He was an only child, but had never known what it was to be lonely, for all the animals on his father's farm were his companions. He could not remember when he had not been sworn friend of the pink-nosed calves, playmate of the white-fleeced lambs, and hail-fellow-well-met with the rude, clever little pigs, whose manners his mother bade him take for a warning and not an example. Hubert loved the heavy cart-horse colt, with its hairy fetlocks; the baby-donkey, with its silver-gray coat and no control over its long ears; the cackling hens and downy chicks, and all things that had life and breath.

When Hubert was a baby his mother would set him on the floor and ask the old spaniel to

let her puppies play with the little boy while she went about her housework; and the child would crawl after them, stretching out his hand and gurgling with joy, the puppies tumbling over their big heads and wagging their trembling tails in silent laughter.

The boy had a name for every duck and fowl in the poultry-yard, and, what is much more surprising, they answered to their names, and would leave the most engrossing pursuits to come when he called. For Hubert's love of living creatures was warmly returned. Had you asked the sheep-dog whom he loved best in the world, he would instantly have barked, 'Hubert!' or the cat whom she loved next best to herself, she would have mewed, 'Hubert!' or had you poked up the pig to ask him whom he loved next best to his dinner, he would have half-lifted his head from the trough and grunted, 'Hubert, to be sure!'

Hubert tamed birds so that they would light on his shoulder and peck grain from his hand. He had no fear of prancing horse or of heavy-stepping ox. Had he met a lion in the way, the boy would have taken him by the beard and kissed him between his glowing eyes.

'Well, good shepherd, it is nothing for nothing in this world. What will you give me if I teach you bird and beast talk?'

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Once, when he was gathering wild strawberries in the wood, he was joined by a brown bear on the prowl, who plainly wanted Hubert to share the fruit with him. So he filled a basket for the bear, and the big beast stood while he threw handfuls of strawberries into his open mouth. As they played thus pleasantly together, Hubert's father entered the wood to fell timber. When he saw his son's grim playfellow he rushed upon him with his hatchet, thinking the fun would end by the bear hugging the boy. But he cried, 'Don't hurt Bruin, father; we are friends. He knows who I am; I have told him I am Hubert.' And the game went on till there was not a strawberry left in the basket.

Sometimes an animal would hurt Hubert, or a bird peck and claw him with a distinctly unkind intention, when he always invented excuses for their bad behaviour. A dog bit him, and he said, He mistook me for some one else who had treated him cruelly. If only we understood the language of the animals such mistakes would not happen, and we should be even better friends than we are.' When he went to milk the red cow, and she tore his arm with her horn, though it hurt him

severely he would not have her punished. He said, 'The cow was doing her duty; she was protecting her young. She thought I was going to steal her calf.' And when a hawk almost blinded him, his mother said impatiently, 'At least you can't say that that vicious bird took you for another hawk!'

'No, mother, for hawks don't peck out hawks' e'en. But he may have heard tales of bogies, and taken me for one, and shown immense courage in attacking me.'

Hubert's mother laughed, and said afterwards to her husband, 'I wish I had half the love for my fellow-men that our son has towards the meanest creatures. He is like the blessed St Francis. The birds and beasts are his sisters and brothers, and he would be as happy to live with them as with you and me!'

Hubert grew into a strong man, kind and gentle and helpful to his parents, skilled in all farm-work, learned in country-lore, and happy in his love for the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air. When he woke in the morning, instead of saying, 'What a fine day! Let me go out and kill something,' he went to make friends with some small

creature or other he had overlooked or that had not previously come his way.

The boys and girls laughed when they saw Hubert leading his flock, carrying a footsore lamb in his arms, and white pigeons fluttering about him, preening themselves on his shoulders. But an old man, bent double with age, said, 'You young folks may laugh at Hubert; but he puts me in mind of the Good Shepherd, and the pigeons are like the dove that came down from heaven.' They might laugh at Hubert, but no one could despise him. He was brave as he was gentle; and there was no better shepherd or more skilful beast-leech than he. It was his great love for living things that set him apart, a man by himself. He had neither time nor inclination to look at a pretty maiden. He would rather hive a swarm of bees or strike up a friendship with a gobbling turkey-cock than go courting; and this wounded the feelings of a maiden who had grown very fond of Hubert. But she cured herself by saying, 'If I had a beak, or feathers, or went on all-fours, he would not know how to make enough of me. As I am only a young girl, he takes no notice of me, and I will take no notice of him.'

It troubled Hubert that he could not talk with the birds and beasts in their own tongue. He had a smattering of the language of dogs, horses, and sheep, and knew something of the easier kind of birds' language, which he spoke with a good accent. But when he attempted conversation he got out of his depth directly, and saw quite plainly that he could not make himself understood. That beasts and birds did not merely neigh, bark, baa, chatter, and squeal he was sure. It was speech of an intelligible kind if you only had the clue to it, and they understood each other perfectly well. But he, who loved them so much, had to guess what they meant by the expression of their eyes and the movement of their ears and tails, and that did not satisfy Hubert.

Hubert's size was a great hindrance to his getting on really familiar terms with insects and other small creatures. When he wanted to watch the ants at work he had to kneel down to see them, and killed them by hundreds in doing so, which is not the best way for a giant to make friends with tiny beings.

It was high summer, and the shepherd and his dog were seated on the ground eating their noon-

tide meal. No sounds were heard but the song of the unseen lark and the crisp bite of the grass as the sheep nibbled their way over the meadows, with heads turned to the sun and tails to the wind. Above them floated in the summer sky little fleecy white clouds like a celestial flock of sheep grazing in blue instead of green fields. When Hubert had finished his dinner of milk and brown bread, he called the birds to a feast of crumbs; and while they pecked about he sang in his big bass voice without startling them:

'O all ye fowls of the air! bless ye the Lord; praise Him, and magnify Him for ever.
O all ye beasts and cattle! bless ye the Lord; praise Him, and magnify Him for ever.'

'A fine song, shepherd. Did you make it yourself?' said a voice at his elbow.

Hubert had thought there was not a human being within a mile of him. But there stood beside him a little man with a long gray beard, and eyes that looked him through.

'That song is as old as the hills, sir; and, for all that, so fresh and simple that a plain man like myself might have made it to-day, if

some one had not saved me the trouble long ago.'

'And think you, shepherd, the fowls of the air and these silly sheep understand what you sing?'

Hubert shook his head.

'Men and beasts understand each other but little. I have to teach my dog to issue my orders and translate their meaning to my flock.'

'Yes,' said the little man with gleaming eyes; 'and it is a blow to our pride that we neither speak nor understand beast-language.'

'I would give anything to learn it. Still, I can speak a little of the birds' language—it is so much easier to pronounce than the beasts'; but I want to know both perfectly.'

'Well, good shepherd, it is nothing for nothing in this world. What will you give me if I teach you bird and beast talk, and make your speech plain to them? You say you would give anything; but I want something, and that something very precious.'

Hubert was neither rich nor poor, but in that happy state that is as far from one extreme as the other. His parents had died and left

him the farm and cattle; but his most precious possession was the little old house in which he was born.

'Sir,' he said suddenly, 'if you will teach me to understand and speak bird and beast language I will give you the house where I and my father before me were born, and where my parents died.'

'Not enough, shepherd; I must have something more precious than your tumble-down cottage.'

Hubert was astonished. But if the little old man demanded his last penny he was ready to give it.

'I have offered you what I value most. Will you take it if I add a yoke of oxen as well?' he said.

'Why, man, you would ruin yourself. You offer to part with house and home and livelihood too; for if you lose your oxen how will you plough?'

'I am willing to part with house and home, and to drive the plough with one ox, if only you will teach me the birds' and beasts' talk.'

'Nay, keep your house and your oxen,' said the little old man with gleaming eyes; 'keep

them, and much good may they do you! Only, if I am to teach you what you want to know, I must be paid, and well paid, too. Promise me that you will give me your first-born son the day he is one year old. Your hand upon it!'

The shepherd laughed and grasped the old man's withered hand.

'That I may safely promise. To a man who will never marry, his first-born child is nothing and nobody; you may have it and welcome.' And the bargain was struck.

'Would you like for a few hours to be small enough to watch the ants at work without hurting them? And without frightening them, to be near the kind earwig and her young, and the tiny field-mouse sitting nibbling a grain of wheat in her front-paws?' asked the little old man temptingly.

Hubert marvelled that the old man read his thoughts; but before he could reply, old 'gray-beard' stood on tip-toe and touched the shepherd's eyes, his ears, and his lips. Instantly Hubert's sight became so keen that he could see the smallest living speck; his ears were opened to sounds so thin and fine that he had never been able to hear

them before, and he spoke strange and difficult words with the greatest ease. Then he became aware that he was shrinking rapidly and shutting up like a telescope. Soon he was no bigger than the little man, and in another minute he was much shorter. But though his body grew smaller and smaller, there was no lessening of his intellect. His mind became stronger and clearer the more it was packed in his tiny body, and the smaller he grew the more piercingly intelligent he felt. Every faculty was at its brightest when he had sunk down to twelve inches, at which height he stopped.

The little man had disappeared, and Hubert, light as thistle-down, leaped about on the grass, keeping out of the way of his sheep, which looked to him big as elephants. But his dog caught sight of him, and came bounding towards him with tail wagging high in the air for a frolic, to roll him over on his back like a hedgehog. Hubert drew himself up to twelve inches, and spoke a few dignified words to him in his own language, when the dog instantly apologised and treated his master with as much respect as when he was six feet high.

Hubert was intensely happy and excited. The air was full of the sweet smell of flowers so modest and

lowly that their scent had never reached him before. Now he was so near them that he drew in fragrance with every breath. The soft rustle of the grass was music to him, and when the wild hyacinths nodded their heads they sounded like clear bells ringing.

How the ground teemed with life! Tiny insects swarmed, talking in thin, high voices, and Hubert understood every word they said. He laughed as he listened to an angry dispute between a bee and an ant. The bee buzzed in praise of his own form of government, and said there was nothing like having a queen to reign over a swarm; and the ant replied that it was still better not to need a queen, and that his people had always got on very well without one.

Just as the bee was trying to sting the ant for holding different opinions from his own, they had to stop quarrelling and stand aside for a funeral procession to pass. Hundreds of ants wound along the road between the blades of grass, followed by a crowd of insects eager to see the burial of a powerful and celebrated ant. They seemed much excited, and were not talking about the dead ant or his widow, but of a big spider that had darted in among a regiment of ants

who were carrying off prisoners of war, knocked them out of their arms, and let them all escape.

When the procession had passed, Hubert stopped to watch a beautiful butterfly slowly working its way out of the chrysalis, with silken wings like soft unfolding leaves all crumpled and pressed. While he bent over the wonderful sight he felt a tremor of the earth's crust under his small feet that alarmed him very much. But it was not an earthquake, only an unusually fine mole burrowing, and he was relieved to see the brown-velvet nose thrust up through the soil. Then by a skip and a jump he saved himself from falling over the prettiest thing in the world: a field-mouse's nest with five tiny, brown, furry babies rolled up fast asleep, and the bright-eyed little mother sitting beside it eating a grain of corn almost too big for her wee hands to hold. The shepherd spoke to her and blessed her in her own language; and in return she very prettily offered him a bite at her grain of corn.

Hubert drew near to a fragrant tuft of wild thyme almost covered with bees that hummed and buzzed about it. These were soon joined by an angry bee, who scolded the others for getting up

late, idling shamefully, and eating more than their fair share of honey. Hubert could hardly believe his ears that a busy bee could be guilty of sloth, idleness, and greediness; but as he was a shepherd he was forced to admit that there may be a black sheep in every fold. While he wondered at what he heard, he was astonished to see a couple of able-bodied cockchafers dragging between them a grasshopper in a limp and exhausted state, his long arms unbent and trailing on the ground. He was gasping for breath, his eyes stuck out, and his jacket seemed terribly tight. Near them a few butterflies staggered along on foot, with upraised wings that kept falling to one side and nearly upsetting them, like a small boat carrying too much sail.

The angry bee had now done scolding, so Hubert asked him politely what might be the meaning of all this.

'Why, these are the guests returning from the Grasshoppers' Feast and the Butterflies' Ball. You may see for yourself what a state they are in. The butterflies have danced till they haven't a leg left to stand on. There! one of them has fallen over. I thought it would. And the grasshopper

you see being taken home by the police in such a disgraceful condition has simply stuffed himself at the feast till he can scarcely breathe. It 's very silly of him, for he knows his sides are stiff and horny, and can't comfortably swell out when he eats too much. He 's suffering horribly.'

The shepherd was shocked, for he had always imagined that tiny creatures knew when they had had enough.

After the talkative bee had flown away, Hubert stretched his short length on the grass, with the tuft of wild thyme for a pillow, and fell fast asleep. He woke to find himself once more his own proper size and height, though at first, after having been so small, he took himself for a giant. The faithful dog Grip had gathered the sheep together, and he and his master led them bleating homeward, to fold them for the night.

The dog was delighted that the shepherd had so quickly learned his language, and he sat up with him after supper talking on all manner of subjects. Hubert was deeply interested in his glimpse into the dog's mind, and in hearing from his own mouth what he thought of men and things.

'You must excuse me, master,' said Grip, 'if I say that the great advantage you have over us dogs is that you are so strong that you can always walk on your hind-legs. If you went on all-fours, as you must have done till some one took the trouble to teach you to stand up, you'd be no match for us. You can't bite, you see, your mouth is such a funny shape; and you can't follow up a scent or anything. But you've learned the hind-legs trick so perfectly that you're never off your guard, and that leaves the front-paws free to do all sorts of things that would be impossible if they were on the ground all the time.'

Hubert laughed aloud.

'Good old Grip! it's a pleasure to know what you think about us men;' and, encouraged by his master, the sheep-dog proceeded to give him his opinion about dogs also. Grip had the greatest contempt for dogs who had never learned a trade and did nothing for a livelihood. 'Now, a sheep-dog—though I say it who am one myself—boar-hound, staghound, and even a turnspit or tinker's dog are all clever, intelligent, and worth listening to. They've had experience, there isn't much they don't know, and they're uncommonly good com-

pany. But as for dogs that live in idleness on the bounty of the two-legged creation, with nothing in the world to do but imitate their vices and overeat themselves till they're the shape of a barrel, I don't call them dogs—they're curs.' And Grip would have talked all night if his master had not said, 'That'll do, old fellow! Good-night. Remember we must get up early.'

Hubert was eager to try if he could talk with other animals besides dogs and sheep; and he found he both spoke and understood beasts' and birds' talk perfectly: the little old man had kept faith with him. The fame of the shepherd's learning spread far and wide, and a brown bear out of the forest came to hear him speak, and to ask him if it was he who, when he was a little boy, had gathered wild strawberries for his grandfather. And the fox came to compliment him to his face, and behind his back said that if men took to learning their language, there would not be a chance left for the poor beasts.

The storks came and asked the shepherd's leave to build their nest on his roof, and he said, 'Yes, if you won't bring me a baby.' Then they clapped and rattled their big bills with laughter, and said,

'We never bring a baby to a house where there is only a man to look after the poor little thing. That much we do know of human ways.'

Now, the maiden who thought she had cured herself of caring for Hubert, found that she had done nothing of the kind. She was thinking of him all day long. She met him one day on the downs with his sheep, piping merrily, and she danced to his tune, but did not speak, and when he stopped piping she ran away. This she did every day for a week, till the shepherd's dog grew angry, and said to his master, 'That 's a bold maid. Did you ask her to follow us and dance when you piped?' And his master replied, 'Mind your own business, Grip, which is looking after sheep.'

Hubert's time was a great deal taken up by animals who came for advice and help, and to ask him to settle their quarrels. This often prevented him from cooking his dinner, and made him late in milking the cow, and she would reproach him and say, 'Master, you ought not to neglect me for your new friends. The stag, the fox, and the pig don't serve you as I do. They none of them give you milk. They only come to gossip and delay milking-time, which you know is

very bad for me. Your good mother, it is true, could not talk with me in my own language, but she never kept me waiting a minute when I was ready for her.'

Then the shepherd began to think he really needed a trustworthy woman about the place, for home was getting very uncomfortable. The man who helped indoors made bad butter and worse cheese, and wasted or spoiled everything he touched. What would Hubert's sainted mother say to such wild and comfortless housekeeping? Then the cow lashed her tail, drew a wisp of hay out of the rack over the manger, and said, with her mouth full, 'You should marry a wife to look after things, and to milk me on the stroke of the clock; that's what you should do!' Hubert did not like to hear the cow telling him what he ought to do. When he was so anxious to learn the beasts' language he had never supposed they would take so much upon themselves as to offer him their advice.

The next time that Hubert met the maiden on the downs he brought her home, and set milk and brown bread before her, and asked if she thought the table-cloth was bleached as white as

when his mother did it herself. She shook her head; and he said, 'Maiden, will you marry me?' And she replied, 'Shepherd, that is what I have intended to do for years.' So they were married on the following Sunday, and on the wedding-day and every day the young wife milked the cow on the stroke of the clock.

Now all was order and cleanliness at the farm. The bread was light, the butter sweet, the cheese rich, the beer good, the linen white and smelling of lavender, floors scoured and windows bright, all made and done by the clever young wife, who seemed to have two pairs of hands and to be in two places at once. Hubert had no more anxiety about his housekeeping. He was free now to spend his time with his dear birds and beasts.

The shepherd and his wife were waked in the early mornings by the loud chattering of the storks in their big untidy nest on the chimney-top, but he never heard them utter a word unfit to pass the bill of a well-conducted stork. A choir of birds in the trees sang the sweetest hymns at daybreak; and while Hubert said his morning prayer the parents woke their young ones, singing:

'Fledgling, awake! the dawn is come; awake!
Lift drowsy head from under ruffled wing,
And learn your song! Let feathered folk praise God.'

When Hubert translated this to his wife she said, 'Dear husband, what a lesson is this for us! If ever we have a child we will bring it up as religiously as though we were birds.' Then the shepherd remembered his rash promise to the little old man, and he hoped for his wife's sake that a child's voice might never be heard in the house.

The following year, when the young lambs were firm on their woolly legs and the orchards white with blossom, the shepherd's wife had a little son born. Hubert was so proud and happy that he forgot his reckless bargain with the little old man, and went to tell the birds and beasts of his joy. They were all extremely kind, and congratulated the shepherd with their whole hearts, hoofs, and horns. The cat, the dog, and the fox regretted that he had not had several little sons at once; but the horse and the cow said one at a time was best. The birds insisted that if his little ones arrived singly, at that rate it would take years to fill the nest; and the shepherd's wife was so proud of her husband's popularity among the beasts,

and of having seen him walking arm in arm with the brown bear, that she was as pleased with their congratulations as he was, and showed the baby to all who came.

'Wife,' said Hubert, 'a common name will not suit our son. I am the only man who can talk with birds and beasts, and the boy must have a name that will remind him of it. He shall be called Leo, after the king of the beasts.' And his wife consented with a good will. Neither of them had seen the lion, though they knew him by his portrait. Neither had any of the beasts in that country seen him, though they all honoured and feared the king's name.

In the fullness of his heart Hubert told his dog what they were going to call the baby, and Grip told the sheep; and an old ewe told the crow that was tearing the wool off her back to line his nest what the baby was to be called; and the crow told the raven, and he told the owl; and the news flew from beak to beak till at length it reached the eagle, the king of the birds. When Grip got home at night he said to the cow, 'The shepherd is going to call his little son after the king of the beasts;' and he spoke so

loud that the horse, the donkey, and the pig heard it too. The pig, who was a great gossip, made haste to tell the rats and the poultry. And the cat heard the news as she sat watching a mouse-hole; and the fox stealthily creeping about the farmyard by moonlight heard the cock crowing with all his might, 'The shepherd is going to call his little son after the king of the beasts!' The rabbit heard it from one of the lambs, and very soon the good news was known everywhere among furred and feathered folk. The brown bear, the stag, and the wild-boar agreed that it was the finest compliment ever paid them by a son of Adam, and the beasts would certainly be present in their strength at the christening of the young Leo.

As the christening-party entered the church the air was darkened by a flock of birds of all sorts and sizes, and hundreds of beasts came shuffling, trotting, and leaping up the churchyard. The shepherd's friends were frightened, and the sexton was shutting the door against them; but the old priest said, 'Leave it open! Let the beasts come into the church; we are all God's creatures!'

With a hop and a flap the birds came first, and perched on every tomb and monument and beam.

With a rush and a crush, pressed shoulder to shoulder in the doorway, followed the beasts, taking their places where the shepherd bade them, and never since they all entered Noah's Ark had so many of them been under one roof before. Though they came unbidden they behaved like distinguished guests, and for the moment old-standing feuds among themselves were forgotten. The fox and the rabbit sat peacefully side by side, the rat mounted on the cat's back to see the better, and a huge hound watched the ceremony from between the stag's branching horns.

When the christening-party left the church, the odd congregation trotted and flew home with them; and Hubert and his wife, carrying the baby Leo, stood in front of the farm amidst a throng of furred and feathered friends. The stag, because of his beauty and nobility, was chosen to speak for the birds and beasts. 'Shepherd,' he said, 'we have come in our strength to be present at the christening of your little son, to show you how deeply we feel the graceful compliment paid us in naming the boy after our great King Leo. Our king dwells in Africa, and we have neither seen his beard nor heard his roar. But some of the

birds who fly southward from the winter cold have seen him and trembled when they heard his voice, and have told us of his kingly ways. Because he lives far from us we are no less his loyal subjects, and you have won our hearts by speaking our tongue and giving our great king's name to your son. And now, shepherd, if ever the boy be in danger or evil case, let him call upon us for aid. We will compass land and sea to serve him. Never forget that, though we may have a thousand hoofs and paws, for you and your son we have but one heart among us.'

Hubert thanked the beasts kindly, and promised that he would surely do as they bade him, and seek their help for the young Leo should he ever need it.

The child grew and thrived, and the proud parents called each other 'father' and 'mother,' that the good words might be in the baby's ears before they could be on his tongue. And the shepherd began to think it was even more wonderful to be Leo's father than to speak the birds' and beasts' language; while his wife was so bound up in her little son that she could hardly bear him out of her sight. So great was her fear of any

harm befalling her darling that when she was busy about her housework she had a little girl to sit by the cradle while he slept, to brush the flies away, and to keep the cat from taking her morning nap on the baby's face.

When little Leo cut his first tooth it was a greater event than if a new planet had been seen in the heavens; and when his golden hair crisped in little rings his mother almost kissed it out of curl. The shepherd would remember with a cold shudder his mad promise to the little old man, and then took foolish comfort in the hope that, as it seldom crossed his own mind, the old man, to whom he supposed it mattered less, might have forgotten it altogether. But he could not be easy till Leo's first birthday had come and gone in safety.

Hubert's sheep had a great many lambs that spring. They kept him busy from dawn to dark with happy work and care, so that he quite forgot little Leo's birthday. His mother remembered it, but she said nothing because she wanted to tease her husband about his forgetfulness. On the morning that little Leo was one year old she put the shepherd's simple dinner in his wallet, and saw

him and his dog set out on their day's work, leading the bleating flock to the downs.

When Hubert was out of sight, the last lamb's wagging tail had disappeared over the knoll, and the sound of bleating and Grip's imperious bark was faintly heard, the shepherd's wife returned to the house. She reached down the horn that hung over the kitchen mantel-shelf. 'Now, little girl,' she said to the child that watched by the cradle, 'take great care of baby while I run after the shepherd to speak to him. I shall soon be back again;' and the light-footed young woman had left the house and crossed the garden before the slow-witted child understood what she had said.

As the mistress went out at the front-door a little old man came in at the back-door. He entered the kitchen on tip-toe lest he should wake the sleeping baby, nodding and making faces, which he meant for smiles, at the little girl.

'I am baby's very own dear grandfather,' he said. 'Don't be afraid of me, my pretty maid. See! I have brought you sweetmeats;' and he took some from his pouch and threw them in the girl's lap. 'Taste and try, my dear, and tell me how you

like them. My name is kind Mr Good, and I have come to see my little grandson on his birthday.'

A light kindled in the dull little girl's eyes as she greedily filled her mouth with the sweetmeats. But before she could taste them she sank against the table-leg in a deep sleep, as 'kind Mr Good' hoped and intended.

'Nothing for nothing in this world,' said the little old man with the long gray beard. 'I knew the shepherd would try to cheat me when the day came, and keep back the price of his learning, so I have come to pay myself.' He seized the sleeping baby in the cradle, and ran with it to the back-door, where a swift black horse stood waiting. The little old man, with the child in his arms, climbed like an ape into the saddle, shook the bridle, and away sped the horse over hill and dale.

The shepherd's wife, who had run laughing after Hubert and his flock, now blew the horn lustily. When her husband heard it he turned about and shouted, 'What's the matter?' and his wife came running towards him, crying out, 'You've forgotten something at home!'

The shepherd stopped to think what it could be. Then he opened his wallet to see if his dinner was there, and everything was quite right. 'See, wife, I have forgotten nothing; it is you who have made a mistake.'

'Can't you think what you have forgotten? Why, you've forgotten Leo's birthday! The darling is one year old to-day, and his own father forgot to wish him many happy returns!'

Then Hubert remembered his wild promise to the little old man. He turned pale and trembled.

'Nay, Hubert, do not look like that! You must not take it so much to heart. It was from no lack of love that you did not think of it; you were so busy that it slipped your mind. I only ran after you to give you a fright, and to make you think you had left something behind you.'

'Whom have you left with the child?' asked her husband.

'I left the little girl watching by his cradle, and he was fast asleep.'

Hubert beckoned to a rook flying overhead. It swooped down on his shoulder and asked him what he wanted.

'Fly to the farm, good rook,' he said, 'and quickly bring me word if all is well with the child.'

'Right gladly will I,' said the bird, and away it flew. It was back again in a few minutes cawing loudly.

'Shepherd, the little girl is in a deep sleep, the cradle empty, and the child gone! The cat, who saw it all, told me that a little old man had just come in at the back-door, given the maiden something to put her to sleep, stolen the baby out of the cradle, and hurried away with it on horseback.'

The poor mother gave a loud cry and dropped on the ground; and even before he lifted her up the shepherd said to the rook, 'Fly! fly for your life! Fly to the stag, and tell him this! Tell him I claim the help of the beasts and birds, as he said, for my little son is in great peril.'

Then his wife wrung her hands and said, 'Oh, my sweet little son! I shall see thee no more! Bad mother am I, that I ever left thee for a moment!'

And the shepherd said, 'Nay, wife, I only am to blame. It is my fault that our child is taken from

us, for I promised to give my first-born son on his first birthday to the old man who taught me the birds' and beasts' tongue. The cunning knave asked me this price, and I, believing I was as cunning as he, readily agreed. Fool that I was! I thought never to have wife or child, and struck the bargain with him, and he has made me keep my word this day!'

Then the shepherd's wife, instead of heaping reproach upon her husband and giving up all for lost, said with a stout heart, 'At least it is well we know what has become of the child. We must seek high and low, by land and water, till we find him, and your friends the birds and beasts will help us.'

Grip proposed that they should leave the flock in charge of the under sheep-dogs, that he and his master might be free to seek for little Leo. And the shepherd's loss was soon made known far and wide. The birds of the air told it to the beasts of the field, and the sheep as they drank from the stream bleated the sad tidings to the fish. The rabbit told it to the small animals that dig and burrow; the ant told it to the caterpillar, and the caterpillar told it to the snail; and all

said with one heart and voice, 'We will find that child or die in the quest.'

A week passed and no trace was found of the old man, the black horse, or little Leo. Hubert's hair was streaked with gray, and his wife had aged ten years. But on the fourteenth day the stag met the sad parents on their wanderings, and brought them the first tidings of their lost darling. A wood-pigeon had just told him that as she sat cooing on the window-ledge of a cottage near the mountains, she saw a very old gray-beard nursing a beautiful child and talking strangely. The old man spoke in her language, and was saying to the child, 'Already, thou little one, I am years younger since I brought thee here, and thou art older. I shall take away thy youth from thee to make me young once more! But thou shalt wizen and pine, and wear a gray beard in thy cradle and I a brown beard at a hundred years. Long will I cherish thy life, for I need thee to keep me young.'

'Now, I know the meaning of the old man's hard bargain, and why he has stolen my little son,' said the shepherd.

'We shall soon find him,' said the mother,

'before the gray beard sprouts on his tender chin.' And they turned their steps towards the mountains.

When they had walked for a week they came to the little cottage a day too late. The storks shouted to them from their nest on the roof that the old man had carried the child away with him into the mountains, high among the snowy peaks, where they could not follow him.

'Where the old man can clamber I can jump and spring, and I will follow my child by land or water,' said the shepherd.

'And I fear nothing,' said the mother; 'where you go I can go.'

At the foot of the mountains they were joined by the stag, the bear, the fox, the chamois, and by many dogs swift and strong. But most wonderful of all was the eagle, the king of the birds. It was not his wont to trouble himself for man or beast; but to-day he had hatched a royal plot.

'Shepherd,' he said, 'I am about to fetch your little son from the thief who has borne him away to yonder high peak. I shall fly through the air with the babe, and lay him safely on his mother's

bosom;' and while he spoke the eagle flapped his wings, and his eyelids rose and fell quickly over his fierce golden eyes.

'I shall see my child dashed to pieces on the rocks! He will fall from your grasp and be killed!' cried the poor mother.

'Fear not. If I am not killed, neither shall he be. You cannot fetch him from where he now is, nor can the beasts. I only can reach the mountain heights and bring the child away in safety. It is a great deed, but it has been done before by one of our family. And shall I be held back by a weak woman's fears from making a name and fame among the kings of the birds?'

The eagle lifted his proud head and looked full in the noonday sun. He spread his wide wings, and with a loud cry rose, circling high into the air. Then, after a long flight, he floated down the wind on level pinions, and was lost in the cloud that shrouded the mountain-side.

The shepherd and his wife fell on their knees praying Heaven to speed the eagle and to save their child. Through a rift in the white cloud they saw the little old man with their child in

his arms clamber up the bare face of the rock. The parents clasped their hands in speechless agony, for they looked to see him drop the child or lose his footing. The great eagle, with rush of wings and fierce cries, hovered above the climbing figure, but would not strike at the old man so near the edge of the precipice lest he should kill the child. But he drove the old man before him to a narrow ledge of rock, where he must set the boy down and fly for his life beyond the reach of the terrible beating wings, unless he turned against fearful odds to face the eagle.

Frantic to save his own mean life, the old man laid the screaming child on the stones. As he turned to leave it to its fate his foot caught, he shot over the edge of the rock, and was lost in the abyss below. The child was rolling towards the same gulf when the glorious eagle swooped down upon it, seized it by its clothes with beak and talons, and making sure of his hold, launched into space from the mountain peak. With strong strokes of his great wings he flew, bearing his precious burden through the air, through cloud and rainbow-tinted spray of roaring waterfalls. Heavier and heavier grew the child on the long flight. The

great wings laboured against the wind like oars against the tide. The king of the eagles would die rather than drop the child. In another moment he had kept his royal word, and little Leo was safe on his mother's bosom.

The Youngest Son.

All the world is made for you,
Youngest son! youngest son!
Eldest son but claims his due,
Guineas many or a few,
Land and castle, field or cot;
Much or little, grudge him not,
Youngest son! youngest son!

Richer than your father's heir,
Youngest son! youngest son!
Though his wealth you may not share,
Yet you have a portion fair,
Heritage the best of all,
Fortune answers to your call,
Youngest son! youngest son!

Light of heart and scant of gold,
Youngest son! youngest son!
Ready wit and courage bold,
Hero of the tale that's told
Of adventure manifold,
Doer of the deed that's done,
Youngest son! youngest son!

ONCE upon a time there was a rich man whose wife died leaving him three sons, Gilderoy, Eustace, and Rollo. In the land where they lived it was both law and custom to make a rich man of the eldest son, and to value him far above his real worth. He inherited the father's land, house, and money, while the younger sons had nothing but what the eldest would not miss, the overflow of a cup that was filled to the brim.

The three brothers were strong, handsome young men. Gilderoy, the eldest, proud and lazy, did nothing with his own hands that he could pay or compel another to do. Eustace, a scholar absorbed in his books, noticed little of what went on about him. Rollo, the youngest, who never read a line, nevertheless learnt something daily from the open book of life, and was wise in things despised by Gilderoy and undreamed of by Eustace.

Shortly before his death their father called for his sons. Gilderoy was hunting, and the servant sent in quest of him found him in hot pursuit of a stag. Angry at being called from the excitement of the chase to the sick-room, he returned sullenly, carrying his gun with him. Eustace was at his desk, and went at once to his father, through mere force of habit book in hand. Rollo was digging on the farm, and they sought him for some time. But once found he hastened home to his father, still grasping his spade. Gilderoy spoke sharply to him for keeping them waiting, till his father raised his hand for silence, and the young man's words sank to an angry mutter.

The old man sat up in his velvet-draped bed, supported by pillows, and looked proudly at his handsome sons. Then he turned to the eldest with a smile.

'You look as though you had come prepared to despatch your old father before his time,' he said, pointing to the gun in Gilderoy's hand.

'An odd thing to bring into a sick-room, sir, I confess. I was just hoping for a good shot when you sent for me; and as I trust, for your

own sake, you won't keep me long, I thought I might as well stick to my gun.'

'And you, Eustace, book in hand, look ready to read the burial service,' continued their father, with a whimsical smile.

'Heaven forbid, sir!' said Eustace, looking with mild surprise at the volume in his hand. 'It seems to be a habit of mine to carry a book without knowing it.'

'And you, Rollo: what has the boy got? A spade, by all that is inappropriate to a bedroom! You seem to have come prepared to dig my grave at a moment's notice.'

Tears rushed to Rollo's eyes. He flung himself on his knees by the bedside and kissed his father's hand.

'I did not know I had brought the thing with me, sir. I feared when you sent for me that you were very ill, and I left my digging at once, and in my haste brought my spade with me.'

His father pressed Rollo's hand. It was sweet to the old man to receive a little affection from one of his sons; and now that he had had his grim little joke with each, he spoke gravely.

'Gilderoy, my eldest son, to you will belong land, money, and houses.'

Gilderoy had always known this, and he could not look surprised; but he nodded approval as if to say, 'Quite right; quite right!'

'You will inherit a great name and a great fortune; see that you lose neither one nor the other.'

'That is really most unnecessary advice, sir,' said Gilderoy with a stiff-necked expression.

'You do not like advice, my son. Let us see if a caution will be more acceptable;' and the old man raised himself on his pillows and pointed at Gilderoy's gun. 'The gun that you carry in your hand will be your ruin should you slay with it the white stag when it comes to drink at the pool. Bear that in mind, Gilderoy; bear that in mind!'

Gilderoy smiled contemptuously, and his father turned towards Eustace and Rollo.

'Your lot in life, my sons, will be very different from that of your eldest brother; but it is no demerit to be a younger son, nor Gilderoy's own doing that he is the first-born. Where there are more than one there must be first and second,

elder and younger, and no wise man fights against what cannot be helped. Law and custom compel me to make a rich man of my eldest son and poor men of my younger sons. But I have done what I could to make better provision for you than my father did for his younger sons. Gilderoy knows this; he will carry out my wishes, and you will not be as badly off as you suppose.'

'Sir,' said Eustace, 'why place it in Gilderoy's hands? Why not leave written directions of your kind intention towards Rollo and me?'

'Your eldest brother has asked to act for me in this matter, and who more capable than he?' replied his father.

And Gilderoy chimed in, 'If I can't look after my own property, who can?'

'And now, dear younger sons, a last word with you,' said their father, again smiling. 'You, Eustace, with your book in your hand, I would remind that our family has never yet produced a scholar; but I should be proud to think that you may become one. If you seek in books the wisdom of man, may it bring you power; and if you seek the wisdom of God, may it

bring you peace!' And Eustace kissed his father's hand.

Then the old man turned towards Rollo, his youngest and dearest son, who stood by the bedside grasping his spade. 'Be you, my son, king of spades, and never knave of spades! Dig no pitfall for your neighbour nor entrench yourself in any false position. Truth, they say, lies in a well; dig deep till you find her, then wear her as a jewel. The spade is far older than the gun or book, and helped man by husbandry partly to retrieve his fall.'

Rollo listened earnestly; but Gilderoy tapped his forehead with a look that said, 'He's off it. Mad as a March hare!'

'But I have neither time nor strength, my son, to give you the history of the spade. I have said what it has done; I will tell you what it may do. It may strike on the crock of gold that lies buried at the foot of the rainbow. It must be an April rainbow, standing one radiant foot on grass and one in cloud, like a jewelled bridge flung between earth and heaven. If you strike your spade in the soil where the grass is dyed with rainbow tints, and before they fade

away dig deep enough, you will find the crock of gold gleaming in the moist brown earth.' And Gilderoy turned away, his shoulders shaking with silent laughter.

Gilderoy did not give his father the funeral due to the head of the house, for he said, 'One need be economical when an estate is burdened with such absurd provision for younger sons. My father was well satisfied with the portions for Eustace and Rollo that stand written in his will these many years past. It was only lately, when his brain was giving way, that he thought of leaving them more, and he has not put it down in writing or told them the amount. I only know how much he meant to take from me and hand over to them, for it comes to that in reality.'

After the funeral Gilderoy said to his brothers, 'I am afraid you will be disappointed; but I find there is nothing more than the usual younger sons' portions left you in my father's will. He made it years ago when he was in full possession of his faculties, and it is as binding now as the day when it was written.'

'Then, what did our father mean,' said Eustace,

'when he said that he had left us more than his younger brothers had?'

Gilderoy laughed.

'You ask me that when you saw the pitiable state he was in, and heard the nonsense the poor man talked about guns, books, and spades! A child might have seen his mind was gone.'

'Our father was as sensible then as we are now,' said Rollo stoutly.

'That he was,' said Eustace, 'and he was quite clear that he had given you directions about our increased portions.'

'Clear you call it! He was so mad that I thought it safer to pretend to understand him, instead of contradicting him as I ought to have done; but I erred as usual on the side of duty.' And silence fell on the brothers, which Rollo was the first to break.

'Now that you have done romancing, Gilderoy, perhaps you will tell us how we stand. What has our father left us in the will?'

'Nothing beyond the usual family provision for younger sons; and even that you cannot have now, for such payments were never intended to embarrass the estate, which they would seriously

do at present. In fact, you can only have twenty gold pieces each; perhaps at some future day I can'——

'Twenty gold pieces!' gasped Eustace.

'Flat robbery, neither more nor less,' said Rollo.

'Then leave this robber's den at once!—Here, Eustace, take your portion; and you, Rollo, take yours;' and Gilderoy laid a little pile of gold on the table before each of his brothers.

'I would not touch it if it were your gift,' said Eustace; 'but it is my own, and no thanks to you.'

'It is only a small instalment of what our poor father left us,' said Rollo, 'and you have cheated us out of the rest. Our father told you you would inherit a great fortune and a great name. Already you have enlarged your fortune by fraud and tarnished your name.'

'Out, out of my sight!' cried Gilderoy; and his brothers turned their backs on him and the home of their childhood. The old servants wept to see the young men thrust forth from their father's house, and they went out into the world followed by their love and blessings. They took

nothing with them but the gold pieces in their pockets, and the book and spade they had unwittingly carried into their father's room.

'What a scoundrel our brother is!' said Rollo when they had walked a while in silence.

'Shall we go to law and claim our rights?' said Eustace.

'No; that only means enriching the lawyers with our twenty gold pieces. Nothing else would come of it. We shall get on somehow, never fear. Book and spade will help us through,' said Rollo; 'learning and labour will find us bread.'

'I shall throw in my lot with the learned monks of Holm Island,' said Eustace. 'There was more than appeared in our father's half-joking words; and I have a mind to study their holy books.'

'Follow your calling, dear brother, and I will follow mine. If my spade should strike on the crock of gold you shall share pot-luck with me;' and the brothers embraced and went their ways.

It was high summer, and Rollo slept in the open air. When he woke in the night the great

yellow moon was resting its chin on the hill-top, pouring light over meadow and stream. He looked at his old friend the man in the moon bent under his load of faggots, and wondered if he felt as lonely as Rollo himself did.

On Rollo tramped day after day in search of he knew not what, till his clothes were torn and weather-stained, shrunk with rain and dew, and faded with the sun, and his face so tanned that you would not have known the daintily reared youth from a gipsy.

For days together he walked ankle-deep in hot dust. He had little enough food to eat, chiefly whortleberries and blackberries which he found on the wide heaths, and he quenched his thirst at the brook, and then went back again to the scorching high-road.

One hot afternoon, hungry and thirsty, Rollo plodded along with his spade over his shoulder, the gray dust rising like smoke under his feet. He was deep in thought. Sure he was that Heaven was leading him, though he knew not whither. His wandering life was free and joyous, but it could not last for ever. Yet it had done one good thing for him already. It had broken

the last link with the soft, indulgent home-life. He had found out that there are other and simpler ways of keeping a clean soul and healthy body together than by eating two big meals a day of many courses; and he, who so loved fine clothing, and would have liked a new suit every day, had discovered that nothing is so comfortable as old clothes.

Suddenly he heard a voice calling, and a woman wearing a large white cap came running from her cottage and beckoned to him from the roadside. She opened the wicket gate, saying hospitably, 'Come in, come in;' and Rollo entered a little garden glowing with roses and lighted with lilies. From the open door of the cottage came a delicious smell of baking, and the woman wiped her floury hands with her apron as she spoke.

'I knew you were coming,' she said kindly. 'You are hungry, young man?'

'Hungry enough, mistress,' said Rollo, seating himself in the porch. 'But how could you know I was coming?'

'I knew it because it is baking-day.'

'O mistress! I am too hungry and tired to

guess riddles; tell me plainly what baking-day has to do with me.'

'Well, then, here's the long and the short of it. We're eight in family, my good man and me and six hearty children, and five are in the field with their father now; and every baking-day I make nine loaves, one more than our number, and God never fails to send hither a poor man hungry and sharp-set for that ninth loaf—ay, sometimes even while it's in the oven.'

Rollo looked in the woman's kindly, cheerful face, and remembered how at home they had always been at greater pains to feed the rich than the poor.

'God bless you, mistress! you are a good woman.'

'Thank you for your blessing, young man; but keep your compliments for those that want them,' she said, smiling; and she drew a small table before him, and put upon it a mug of milk and the providential ninth loaf hot from the oven. A tiny child whom Rollo had not noticed, clinging to the folds of its mother's ample skirts, looked up at him and laughed, toddling by her side as she moved about. He called the little one to him and gave it a draught of milk.

'There, youngster, if ever you should need it, may some one be as kind to you as your mother has been to me.'

'If that isn't almost word for word what a poor man said to Dicky a month ago as he sat where you are sitting eating the ninth loaf!' said the woman; 'and he was a gentleman.'

'How did you find that out, mistress?'

'Why, if you don't mind my saying it, he had no tools nor a spade as you have; and when I gave him a bowl of water to wash himself, he only used the middle of the towel to dry his hands. He'd nothing but a book with him; he was a fine scholar.'

'Was he dark and slender, and did he look as if he walked in a dream?' asked Rollo eagerly.

'That's him! You must have met him on the road! Maybe he even spoke to you, for there was no pride about him.'

'Oh yes, I know him and his book quite well. You're right, he is a gentleman, and so is his younger brother.'

'Well, when he'd eaten his bread he said, "What can I do for you, my good woman?" and I said, "O, sir! if there's anything in that book

of yours that I can understand, would you read it to me? I never see a book except in church, and it's chained to the desk, and the priest reads out of it on Sundays; but it's in Latin, which is Greek to me, and I'm none the wiser." Then he said his book was the same as the church book, and in Latin too; but he'd do me a bit into English. And he read to me and the children about Joseph and his brethren; a rare story it is to set your eyes running and your heart thumping.'

'Did the stranger say where he was going?'

'He only said that his face was set north. He offered me a gold piece, but I wouldn't touch it, for I said, "That would keep you for a month at the 'Dragon Volant,' eating and drinking of the best." I told him not to be so free with his money, and warned him of a gang of cut-throat robbers wandering hereabout. But you've no need to fear them, young man. An empty purse is the best protection, and that spade of yours will keep you from want.'

Rollo hoped his brother Eustace had escaped the robbers, and he took what the good woman said as a hint for his own safety. Before he

left the hospitable cottage he did a couple of hours' digging in the garden for the good-wife, and, having earned his bread and milk, thanked his kind hostess, kissed the little child, and went his way.

As soon as Rollo was out of sight he sat down under a hay-stack. He took off his shoes, and laid ten of his gold pieces in the sole of one and nine in the other, and the twentieth he kept in his pocket to spend by the way. Then he sprang up lightly, treading his fortune under-foot, and, like the King's horse in the story, shod with gold.

Rollo arrived at the 'Dragon Volant' late in the afternoon. He walked into the kitchen of the inn and ordered a cup of beer so that he might change his gold piece into small coin. He seated himself near a couple of honest fellows, a wagoner and a swineherd, who sadly wanted more drink but had not a penny left between them. Rollo liked the look of the men, so he said, 'Good sirs, 'tis a hot and thirsty day; let me pay for a flagon of beer. I have a few groats to spend—a rare thing with me. Let us share the pleasure of it together.'

'Right willingly, sir,' said the wagoner; 'and we'll drink your good health into the bargain, and may your pockets be lined with Harry groats if this is how you spend them.'

'You be a stranger and a wayfaring man, sir,' said the swineherd, looking at Rollo's weather-stained clothes; 'but you be a friendly soul. Give me the chance and I'll do 'ee a good turn, sure as my name's Digory Dole.'

And the two men drank Rollo's health till they went purple in the face and almost lost their breath. Then they fell to talk about their favourite animals.

Quoth the wagoner, 'Give me a team o' gray Flanders mares wi' shining brass furniture and little bells tinkling all over 'em, drawing a great covered wagon along the king's highway steady and stately as a four-post bed, and I don't fash myself over who goes bare or who goes hungry, so long as I can see a sight like that!'

Quoth the swineherd, raising a face red and shining from the tankard, 'A Flanders mare or a Suffolk Punch is all very well for what they be; but give me a blue pig, I say! When did you ever know a horse as 'ud grunt wi' pleasure when

you scratched his back, or look up at you wi' a cunning little dark-blue eye and a lovely flat moist nose-end wi' a ring through it? Why, never, I say!' And having silenced the wagoner, who looked troubled but not convinced, the swineherd emptied his mug at a draught.

Rollo was offering his gold piece to the landlord when the door opened and three evil-looking fellows, with slouch-hats hiding the upper part of their faces, entered the inn. The landlord turned pale and whispered, 'Hide your money out of sight! Have a care; these are gentlemen of the highway.' The wagoner and the swineherd drew the back of their hands across their mouths, rose from the table, and winking mysteriously at Rollo to follow them, tip-toed out of the kitchen as though they were leaving church.

The three travellers, without taking off their broad hats, flung themselves on the benches. The landlord went to draw a flagon of red wine for his suspicious-looking guests, and Rollo took up his spade and left the house. The eldest of the three men, a thick-set, scowling fellow with a short gray beard, then spoke: 'That's the man

we want; the man with the spade! See which way he goes, Hal!' And the villainous-looking Hal slipped out of the kitchen stealthily as a cat, and came back again speedily. Shortly afterwards the men, refreshed with bread and cheese and wine, were hastening along the road after Rollo in the twilight.

Rollo trudged along shouldering his spade, when he heard footsteps behind him and a hand was laid on his shoulder. The ruffians from the 'Dragon Volant' had overtaken him, and their chief had him fast by the collar.

'Young man, you must do some work for us with that spade of yours.'

Rollo faced the man squarely.

'Is it honest work you want, for none other will I do?'

'Honest work, say you? Honest enough as times go, and all in the way of trade;' and the chief made a sign, and his men pinioned Rollo, bound his hands behind him, tied a cloth over his eyes, and, carrying his spade, led him blindfolded between them.

They left the high-road and hurried their prisoner along over rough ground and foot-catch-

ing tussocks of grass. At length they halted in a wood, as Rollo supposed from the number of times that he hurt his head against the branches of the trees. There they unbound his eyes, and at first he was too dazzled to see anything. But he sprang back terrified when he saw lying at his feet among the bracken the body of a murdered man. He had been robbed as well as murdered, for his pockets were turned inside out, and everything of value torn from his clothing.

'Now you understand why we wanted you and your spade,' said the chief grimly, while his men unbound Rollo's hands. 'Burying is no part of our trade; we leave that to affectionate friends. But in this case we have good reason for doing their work as well as our own. And now, young fellow, fall to with your spade. Six feet by two, and three deep, is the order.'

'Not deep enough to hide a murdered man. The dogs will scratch him up, and you will swing on the gallows-tree for this,' said Rollo.

The robbers looked uneasily at him. But the chief said fiercely:

'Do as I bid you, and keep a civil tongue, or

a dagger-thrust will settle you, and we'll dig a pit with your own spade that shall hold both you and *him*.'

Then thought Rollo, 'I can but die once. The time may have come now. God grant me to die clean-handed.'

'Dig the graves of your murdered men yourselves, for I will never help you to do the devil's work,' he said.

The robbers rushed upon him, and he lifted his spade to strike at the chief, when he flashed out his dagger, stabbed him in the side, and Rollo fell senseless to the ground. At the same instant the barking of dogs and shouting of men were heard. The robbers turned to fly, but were overtaken and dragged down by bloodhounds, and caught and bound by their pursuers.

The wagoner and the swineherd had seen the robbers on the highway seize and carry off the pleasant young man who treated them at the 'Dragon Volant,' and they gave the alarm and raised the neighbourhood. It was through them that Rollo's life was saved and the murdered man avenged. The murderers were hanged in the wood where their last crime was committed;

but nothing would induce them to say where they had buried their treasure. They had long been the terror of the country, and had piled up a fortune with their ill-gotten gains, and hidden it cleverly as a magpie would hide a glittering button. 'I take my secret with me,' said the robber chief when the noose was round his neck. 'You may seek for my hoard a hundred years, be close to it, and never find it.'

A fortnight later Rollo opened his eyes as he lay in bed between lavender-scented linen sheets. He did not know where he was. The sunlight streamed through the open casement, and in the garden a robin was singing in a way to melt a heart of stone. 'Oh, certainly I died some time ago, and am in paradise,' he thought, 'though most unworthy to be here.'

From that hour Rollo grew steadily stronger, and the wound in his side healed perfectly. He had been nursed at the mill where Gurth the wagoner and Digory Dole the swineherd worked, and the miller and his wife and handsome daughter had cared for him as though he had been their son and brother. The first question he asked when he regained his memory was, 'Where are my

shoes?' The miller laughed and said, 'Your shoes are safe enough, and so are the nineteen gold pieces you trod underfoot. The good-wife hung them all in a pudding-bag in the chimney where the soot is thickest, so that if they were stolen we should know the thief, for he'd be as black as a sweep.'

Now, the miller's pretty daughter Genefer was clever and good-tempered, and could put her hand to anything. See her spinning—she did it so well that she might never have done anything else; see her iron her father's shirt, and you felt that ironing was one of the fine arts. She made cowslip-wine clear as glass and fragrant as the meadows, and tarts so light that you could blow them about like feathers. 'This is the wife for me,' thought Rollo; and he asked Genefer if she would marry him when he had a house to live in, a field full of cowslips to turn into wine, and a sack of flour for her pastry. Rollo did not tell her who he was, and said his fortune was yet to make. And Genefer promised him that when he was ready she would marry him with a hearty good-will.

But Genefer's parents, though they had grown fond of Rollo, did not want him for their son-in-

law, for they had set their hearts on marrying their daughter to a rich man, and a youth with twenty pieces of gold that might be lost before you could turn round was not what they meant by wealth, and they were angry with Genefer for promising to marry Rollo, and hoped that she would change her mind when he was gone.

When Rollo left the mill the pudding-bag containing his money was hooked down the chimney with a stick, and one of his gold pieces he gave to Gurth the wagoner and one to Digory Dole the swineherd, who saved his life and were friends in need. He heartily thanked the miller and his wife for their kindness, and promising Genefer to come back and marry her, shouldered his spade, and went his way.

After three days' walking Rollo came to a town with red-roofed white houses, and a big church with a tower and peal of bells heard far and wide. The town was enclosed with gray stone walls. Beneath them a stream flowed so clear that you saw the grains of sand in its bed and silvery fish darting hither and thither. Here Rollo stayed contentedly enough for some time, earning his bread by his spade, digging and planting

the gardens round the houses, and making friends everywhere.

A rich merchant of the town who saw Rollo at prayers in the big church, and noticed how hard he worked, took a liking to him, and talked with him, asking him many questions. 'You can't go on digging all your life. What do you mean to do?'

'I mean to be a farmer, to till the soil and rear cattle,' said Rollo.

'Then I can help you, for I have a farm that would suit you, and I want a good tenant. The rent is nothing to me, and I could give you the whole thing if I chose, house, land, and stock, but I shan't. If I gave you the farm you'd grow lazy; you couldn't help it. I've ruined several young men that way already; but you shan't be one of them.'

Rollo laughed.

'I want no presents, sir. Hitherto I have been a giver and not a receiver, and that suits me best.'

'A brave spirit,' said the merchant; 'and I'll put the rent as low as I can. I'll make it thirty gold pieces a year, and dirt cheap! There's a chance for you.'

Rollo shook his head ruefully. 'I have but seventeen gold pieces in the world, and nothing is cheap to me that's a penny more than that.'

'Is there no member of your family better off than yourself from whom you could borrow?' asked the merchant.

'No, sir,' said Rollo promptly. 'In our family the eldest son never lends, and the youngest does not borrow.'

'What! are you a youngest son? Then you need never lose heart; you'll have youngest son's luck, that's certain. I have a wagon that starts to-morrow to take wool to Norwich; you can go with it and lay out your money there in cloth, and sell it for yourself. You stay three weeks in the city, and come back in the wagon, and if your gold pieces haven't added to their number by that time, you're not the youngest son I take you for.' And Rollo accepted the merchant's offer and thanked him heartily.

The day Rollo left Norwich after doing business successfully, while the wagon was loading for the return journey, he heard the pealing of bells and saw a fine wedding entering a big church. He joined the crowd of onlookers, and asked a

man near him what great people were being married.

'The bridegroom doesn't belong to these parts, so he doesn't count,' said the man. 'The bride we raised ourselves, in a manner of speaking, though she's no credit to us, being as bad-tempered as she is ugly. But she's the richest woman in Norfolk, and we grudge her money going out of the county.'

Rollo laughed.

'Then why hasn't one of your Norfolk gentlemen married her?'

'Many have asked her, sir; but if she said yes they quarrelled, and it never came to a wedding. One she struck in the face, another got his hair pulled, and one she pushed downstairs. It'll be a post of danger, i' faith, to be the Lady Barbara's husband.'

'And is the brave man rich or poor?' asked Rollo.

'You'd say he couldn't be rich, sir, or he'd buy something better worth having with his wealth than an ugly shrew twenty years older than himself. They tell me he's rich enough to have chosen some poor pretty maiden for his wife,

and made a great lady of her. Gilderoy the bridegroom's name is, and he's all for money. They say he wasn't content with his own inheritance, but he must needs rob his younger brothers of theirs, and turn them out of doors. Why, man, what ails you? You're white as a clout! I doubt you're from the country and find city sights too much for you. But there they come out of the church. There's a bride for you! fit to frighten the crows, and a scowl on her brow like a thundercloud! That's the bridegroom. That's Master Gilderoy, him with the hawk's eye and thin lips,' said the man excitedly. 'Lady Barbara's found her match! She'll get as good as she gives from a husband with a face like that, and serve her right!'

Rollo took off his cap and cheered with the crowd as the procession passed, and shouted, 'Gilderoy for ever!' His brother started and looked about him, but he did not recognise Rollo with beard and moustache, and dressed very differently from what he had been at home.

Rollo was now able with the profits of his business in Norwich to take the rich merchant's farm, and when everything was in working order

There, sure enough, . . . was an iron crock filled with gold and jewels.

he left it for a short time to go and marry Genefer. He chose a strong, broad-backed horse for the journey, that he might bring his bride home seated on a pillion behind him. The miller and his wife tried hard to like Rollo for their son-in-law, since Genefer said that she would marry him or no one, but they could not bear to part with their only child. But Genefer said, 'You left your parents, mother, to marry my father. I'm only doing as you did, so give me your blessing and let me go. I'll come and see you in apple-blossom time, so you'll know when to expect me.' And the old people very unwillingly gave their daughter to Rollo, and mourned over the rich son-in-law they had intended to have.

The first year at the farm things did not prosper with the young couple. The lambs died, a flood swept away the hay, and the harvest failed. Rollo worked harder than any of his men, and his spade was worn bright as silver and sharp as a knife with constant use. Genefer made cheese and butter, cooked and spun, and turned her hand to everything. But in spite of all, their little hoard melted away till Rollo kept only one

labourer to help him, for he could not pay both wages and rent.

But the young couple did not lose heart, and when their little son was born they felt rich indeed. 'As soon as the apple-blossom comes we will go to the mill, and show my father and mother their grandchild,' said Genefer.

Rollo thought it would be better to stay at home and look after the farm. But he did not thwart her; he only said, 'Very well; we must go in the covered cart, then, for we're a family party now.'

The night before they set out, Genefer went to bed tired with preparations for the journey, and fell fast asleep. She dreamt that a little old man with a long white beard came to her and asked where they were going the next day, and she told him about the intended journey home.

'And what are you taking with you in the cart besides your food and clothes?' he asked.

'Nothing, of course. We must spare the horse all the weight we can.'

'Well,' said the little old man, 'if you want this to be the most prosperous journey a farmer and his wife ever made, your husband must take his

spade with him — the old spade that he has polished with use.'

'There are spades enough at my father's; why need Rollo take his own?'

'Do you bandy words with me?' said the little man angrily. 'It will be the worse for your husband if he does not do as I say. Tell him to take his old spade with him, and bear in mind what his father said to him on his deathbed, or fortune will turn her back on him for ever;' and the little old man looked so fierce that Genefer woke with a start.

Three times Genefer dreamed the same dream, and in the morning she told it to her husband. He laughed, but when she said that the old man bade him remember his father's dying words he became thoughtful. His wife urged him to do as the dream-man said, it was so simple a thing; it could do no harm even if it did no good. And Rollo said, 'We are so poor that I'm willing to clutch at any straw. I don't think much of your dream, mind you; yet it's queer your little old man seemed to know about my father. Yes, the spade shall go with us.'

The family party—father, mother, baby, and

spade—rumbled along the lanes in the cart between blossoming hedges, and at the end of the third day they drew up at the door of the mill. The miller lifted his daughter and grandson from the cart, and tongues clacked as loud as the mill, and Genefer and her mother both talked at once as hard as they could. They agreed that the baby was a wonderful and extraordinary child, with his grandfather's nose, and his grandmother's mouth, and his mother's blue eyes.

'And his father's chin,' suggested Genefer; 'his father's chin!'

'Nothing of the kind!' said her mother. 'Why, it's my uncle Gregory's chin all the world over.' And Rollo wasn't allowed to have any ownership in his own little son; it was the grandchild of the mill, and its father was altogether overlooked.

Then the miller asked his son-in-law, 'How are you getting on at the farm?'

'Oh, better than some, I suppose, and worse than others.'

'Have you got any money?'

Rollo laughed. 'The boy is all the riches we have so far.'

'That's a kind of riches which will eat you out

of house and home,' said the miller crossly. 'My daughter 's entitled to something better than that.'

'I am able and willing to work for wife and child,' said Rollo sturdily. 'I've brought my old friend the spade with me, to lose no chance of turning an honest penny while I stay here.'

'I thought you were hard-up when I saw the spade come too,' said the miller, with an ill-humoured laugh. 'But not a penny of my money shall you see, though Genefer 's my only child, if you can't keep her better than a day-labourer's wife.'

The miller's coarse and unjust words wounded Rollo. But he did not answer him at once. He remembered this man had saved his life and shown him great kindness. It was only as a son-in-law that he hated him.

'Master Miller,' he said, 'those are words that break friendship. I will not take another meal under your roof till you say plainly that I am the man of all others you would have chosen for your daughter's husband. Mark that!' And Rollo told Genefer he would leave her for a short time with her parents, and come back again to take her and the baby home. Rollo felt sad and lonely as he left the mill, taking his familiar spade with

him for company. He turned his steps towards the spot where the robbers would have killed him if the miller and his men had not come to his aid. He thought as he strode along of the robber's taunt about his buried treasure, and wondered whether there was really any such thing, when suddenly he heard the sweet pattering of an April shower on the leaves overhead. He stood at the edge of the wood; before him stretched a wide heath covered with heather and dotted with gnarled thorn-trees. The bright rain fell lightly, and the shadow of a cloud passed over the golden gorse. A lark rose trilling high in the air, and as Rollo looked up to follow his flight a rainbow sprang across the sky. One radiant foot rested on the heath, dyeing the heather and white-thorn with all its brilliant colours, and so wide was the span of the bow that the other foot might be gleaming at heaven's gate.

Rollo recalled his father's words and his wife's dream, and rushed towards the glittering rainbow, fleet-footed as a deer. But it seemed to race before him over the heath, keeping far ahead of him while he followed in hot pursuit. He flew over the rough ground as though a pack of hounds

were at his heels; surely the rainbow must fade before he reached it or he drop dead by the way.

Suddenly Rollo dashed into a glorious band of colour, and found himself bathed in orange light that turned all things to gold. He stopped, panting with exertion, struck his spade into the soil, and dug out a gleaming sod. Quick as thought he thrust his spade a second time deeper, as the colour grew every moment less intense. With frenzied haste he dug a third time deeper still, and in the waning orange light his spade struck something hard that rang like metal.

'The crock of gold!' he cried. There, sure enough, plain to be seen in the common light of day following on the rainbow splendour, was an iron crock filled with gold and jewels, a king's ransom stowed away in a huge broth-kettle.

Before Rollo plunged his hands into the treasure he lifted them in thanks to Heaven that had opened this way for him out of all his difficulties. Then he took up one by one and examined jewels, strings of pearls, precious stones, gold and silver flagons, and more money than a man needs in a lifetime. No one was likely to come upon him and his treasure-trove, for there were few folks

thereabout, and they were frightened both of the wood and heath, which they left to the ghosts of the hanged robbers who were believed to walk there. Yet Rollo started at every sound: the cawing of rooks, the shouting of cuckoos, the rush of the wind in the bracken. He hung gold chains and strings of gems about him, pinned jewelled brooches on his breast, and crammed his pockets till he could scarcely button his jacket; and still there remained a mine of jewels and a mint of gold in the iron pot.

Rollo cut a mark on the trunk of a thorn-tree, and measured the distance to where the treasure lay, so that he might easily find it again. Then he threw in the soil and covered the place and his spade with gorse held down by big stones, and set off on the long walk back to the shed behind the mill where his horse and cart were kept.

The moon had risen by the time that Rollo entered the shed and bolted the door behind him. He took off his heavy-laden jacket, opened the shutter to let in the moonlight, and hid his treasure under some bags of beans. He patted his horse and told him to be quiet, for the faithful beast was much disturbed by his master's unusual goings on. Rollo then took up three empty sacks, and, letting him-

self out into the moonlight, trudged back by field and heath to his gold-mine. He shovelled the earth away, and, opening the iron vessel, put as much treasure as he could carry into one sack, and into the remaining two a load that he could scarcely move, and the crock of gold was empty.

Then Rollo reburied the iron pot, trampling the earth above it and planting small gorse-bushes, so that no one could have told the ground had been disturbed. The two heavy sacks he hid in the bracken till he could fetch them away; the third and lightest he threw over his shoulder. The moon had set, and the dawn cast Rollo's strange shadow across the furrows as he staggered along, stooping under his burden. When he reached the shed he flung himself in the bottom of the covered cart and slept till far into the day.

Rollo woke hungry as a hunter, and as the mill was closed to him till more prosperous times, he betook himself to the 'Dragon Volant,' a good three miles away, and there had a hearty meal. He sat at a table by the window watching some men in front of the inn egging on a gigantic man in tattered hose and jerkin to perform feats of strength. One offered him a cup of beer to carry a sack of

flour on his left arm like a baby; another a black pudding to unhinge the great swing-gate and carry it across the road on his back.

Hungry as he was, Rollo put down his knife and fork to watch the sport.

'Landlord,' said he, 'who is yonder hulking fellow strong as a giant? See! he carries three men now, one on his back and one under each arm.'

'Don't you know daft Kurdie, sir? He plays strong man at every wake and fair in the country-side. He's had a bee in his bonnet this many a year. He hasn't wit to do a day's straight-on-end work; but for showing off like that, or for a powerful odd job with some one telling him what to do, Kurdie hasn't got his equal.'

'I like his looks,' said Rollo. 'I'll fetch him in and treat him to a good square meal if you will set another plate and chair.'

'You don't know what you're doing, sir! Kurdie eats like five men each with a wolf in his inside, and that's speaking against my own interest; but it's gospel true.'

Rollo laughed. 'Let the poor fool have his fill. I can pay his score as well as my own;' and he

called the uncouth fellow into the kitchen. Feeble as Kurdie's mind was, he understood Rollo's hospitable intentions, and seated himself at the table in a great oak chair that groaned under his weight.

'I've been watching you play giant's tricks out there, Kurdie. I hear you are the strongest man in the country,' said Rollo.

'That I be, master. But it's a matter o' victuals, an' if I bain't full o' meat an' drink, a little nibblin' mouse is a stronger man than Kurdie;' and the half-giant, half-idiot looked up from under his thatch of red hair with a cunning grin.

'Well, Kurdie, you shall eat and drink as much as you like at this table. You're my guest, and when you've had enough you shall come with me and show me your very best feats of strength; only I must tell you what they're to be. And now fall to on your roast-beef. What will you have to drink?'

And the landlord answered, 'When any one treats Kurdie he always asks for a flagon o' French wine.'

'So I do, master. Gi'e me a flagon o' clary wine to drink your health in.'

Kurdie ate and drank hard for an hour, till dish and plate were polished clean, and his cup drained to the last drop.

'Now I've got England and France under my belt,' he said, and looked round for applause. But Rollo did not see his lumbering joke, and disappointment clouded poor Kurdie's face.

'That's his jest, sir,' said the landlord, explaining. 'When Kurdie's full of English beef and French wine he always says the same. We should miss it if we didn't hear it. I've known folks come miles to hear Kurdie's joke.'

Then Rollo said, 'Say it again, Kurdie, and I'll laugh with all my might.' So Kurdie said it again, and the strong man was happy once more, and carried the supper-table round the kitchen in his left hand to show that he bore no ill-will.

Rollo and Kurdie left the inn as the moon rose, and tramped by road and furrow till they came to the shed where Rollo had spent the night. Rollo told Kurdie to put the treasure-sack hidden among the beans into the cart, and he did it easily, though he said, 'These be heavy beans, master.'

Rollo harnessed the horse to the cart, and away they jolted over rough fields and lanes, and whenever a wheel stuck in a rut Kurdie put his shoulder to it and lifted it out. The road grew wilder and steeper, till even with Kurdie's help the horse could pull no farther, and came to a standstill.

Rollo and the strong man crossed the heath, knee-deep in heather and bracken, to the spot where the two heavy sacks lay hidden. Then Kurdie's red face grew pale and he whispered, 'Master, there be troops o' boggarts here o' nights.'

'Then we shan't see them, Kurdie. We shall be far away when night falls;' and he whistled to keep up the strong man's courage.

It was splendid to see how Kurdie heaved a sack on each shoulder, and with bowed back and bent knees set off under his load like Atlas carrying the globe. Drops of sweat fell from his brow; his muscles started like thick cords; he breathed deep and hard; but he never paused till he had the two treasure-sacks in the cart.

As he wiped his hot face he said, 'These be monstrous heavy beans, master. I couldn't ha' carried un if I hadn't had France and England

under my belt;' and Kurdie again laughed uproariously at his one joke.

'Come, Kurdie, put your shoulder to the wheel and lift the cart out of the ruts;' and, pushing and pulling, the two men helped the horse along till they came to an easier road. Then Rollo gave the strong man a gold piece, that made his eyes nearly start from his head with amazement; and he cried, 'Run, Kurdie, run; the boggarts are after you!' and Kurdie ran like a hare.

When Rollo got home he hid the sacks in the cellar. Then he examined his treasure-trove, and among many precious and costly things found a purse containing twenty pieces of gold, which he recognised as belonging to Eustace; and he wept for fear that his brother had been murdered, and set the purse carefully aside in a place by itself.

From that time forth everything prospered with Rollo. He bought a great estate; his crops and cattle were the finest in the country; he built a noble house, and had many sons and daughters. He treated all his children with equal love and justice, for he said, 'There shall be no eldest son in my family.' When the miller and his wife

saw that their son-in-law was rich and prosperous, and that Genefer wore pearls as big as horse-beans, they said that he was the one man in the world they would have chosen to marry their daughter; and Rollo, who heard them say it, kept his promise, and had dinner with them at the mill.

Years passed by, and Rollo was an elderly man with a gray beard when a great longing came over him to visit the place of his birth. He wished to know how Gilderoy fared, and whether Eustace was still alive. So he set off homewards on horseback, attended by three of his servants, a very different person from the poor and joyous youth who had walked the same road years ago.

As Rollo drew near to the old home he bade his men wait while he went on alone, for he did not know with what reception he might meet. The place was strangely changed; but what astonished him most was that he could no longer see the towers of the house from the road. The trees could not have grown so high as to hide them; and he stood up in the stirrups and looked about him in bewilderment. Everywhere were signs of mismanagement and neglect. As he rode

slowly by the pool and looked up the grassy glade he understood why the towers were invisible—there were none. The old home had been burnt to the ground, and nothing was left but blackened stones.

Rollo dismounted, tied his horse to a tree, and hastened on foot towards the dismal ruin. He had not gone far when his heart beat quick as he met two elderly men, one white-haired and scowling-faced, without doubt Gilderoy; the other, a monk with a beautiful and benign expression, was as certainly Eustace.

Rollo advanced with head uncovered, and at first neither of them knew him. 'Brothers, am I so changed that you do not know me?'

And both of them said, 'Can it be Rollo?' and Eustace embraced him, but Gilderoy changed colour and hung his head.

'The cloister is more peaceful than the world, to judge by your faces,' said Rollo, looking from the monk's placid face to Gilderoy's furrowed brow.

'You are right, brother Rollo. Our father's dying wish for me is fulfilled, and my life has been studious and peaceful.'

'And I have not had peace, for I have not deserved it,' said Gilderoy sadly.

Then Rollo gave Eustace his purse containing the twenty gold pieces, and told him the story of how strangely it had come into his possession.

And Eustace said, smiling, 'Brother Rollo, I have no need for money, and in five-and-twenty years I have not seen so many gold pieces as this purse contains.'

'Hide it out of my sight,' said Gilderoy. 'I have sinned against you both, and kept back your inheritance, and now that I have the will to atone for my sin I have not the means. My riches have taken to themselves wings, and are fled away. I tried to think our father wandered in his mind when he talked to us on his death-bed, but all has happened as he said. Shall I tell you how the very thing he warned me of has come to pass?'

And his brothers, who pitied and forgave Gilderoy, said, 'Tell us.'

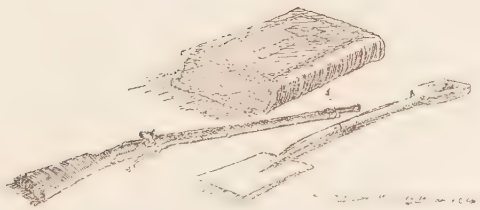
'It is soon told,' said he. 'After robbing you of your inheritance to add to my own, I had no joy in my wealth, though I tried to increase it by marrying a very rich woman with the

worst temper in the world, and old enough to be my mother. We had no children, and spent our time in quarrelling. I had told her of my father's warning about the gun that I kept hung in the hall, and had not fired since his death, and she twitted me with superstition and cowardice. Once before guests she gibed and mocked me till I could bear it no longer, and taking down the gun, I left the house and walked towards the pool. Her shrill voice followed me: "You dare not fire that gun. If you have the spirit of a man you will shoot a wildfowl on the water, and kill it and superstition at once." I fired, and at the same instant a white stag bounded out of the thicket and fell dead by the pool, with my bullet through its heart.

'From that day misfortune has dogged my steps. Our old home was burnt down; the crops failed; the cattle died; I lost my health; I was robbed by my most trusted men. But two blessings Heaven has sent me that make up for all. My wife left me when my troubles began; and though she took her wealth with her, I minded nothing in the joy of her departure. And I have heartily repented of the evil I did

you both. You forgive me, but I cannot forgive myself.'

'How strangely our father's words are fulfilled!' said the monk. 'You, Gilderoy, with your gun, have killed the white stag; but good has come out of evil; you, Rollo, with your spade, have dug up the crock of gold at the foot of the rainbow, and have wealth and renown; and I, with my book, have found peace and knowledge.'



The King's Holiday.

The King is full of mirth to-day,
His heart is light, and he would play;
Would play at being just a man—
A simple, plain, unregal man!

'Hang my crown on the nearest peg,
Take "Honi soit" from off my leg,
The George and Dragon from my breast,
The orb and sceptre, and the rest!

'Now I'm plain Jack, and free as air,
Unknown to wander here and there;
Man among men to have my fling,
While you may shout, "God save the King!"'

KINGS AT PLAY.

THE King wanted a holiday. He had been busy doing nothing for a long time, and needed rest. He was tired of the restraints of royalty, tired of the weary round of amusements, tired of never being alone, and tired of affairs of State. His kingship weighed heavily on him, and had he known the words, 'Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown,' he would have uttered them feelingly. But King Bruno was not familiar with Shakespeare, who has saved us a world of trouble by saying perfectly all that can be said about everything. So, without speaking immortal words on the subject, the King merely said to his friend Baron Flick, 'If I don't get away from all this for a short time, and kick up my heels as a private citizen, I shall go mad. I've told the Queen that I'm going away, and you and I

will be off together without the formality of leave-taking.'

King Bruno had been obliged for reasons of State to marry the daughter of a great neighbouring Sovereign. Queen Antonia was a dull woman, always shocked or bewildered by her husband's whimsical humour. She took the King's jokes in earnest, and when he was serious she thought he spoke in fun. She had no children, and spent her time in tapestry-work with her maidens, wishing that she were Queen in her own right instead of being only a Queen Consort.

Baron Flick had accompanied the King before, when he had amused himself by travelling abroad as a private gentleman; and now, for a change, his master wished to take his holiday at home; to go in and out unsuspected among his own people, and unknown to associate with them as one of themselves. But it must be kept a dead secret, or the game would be spoilt. It must be supposed that the King was going abroad without leaving an address where he might be found; and to convince one and all, great and small, that King Bruno was leaving the country, he appointed the Queen Antonia Regent in his absence.

The day before he set out on his travels, the King held an informal council at the Forest Schloss with his great officers, who were also his guests and hunting companions. As soon as business was despatched, the King sat swinging his heels on the wide window-seat, throwing pellets of paper from the open casement at the tame stork that clattered its long bill at him in the garden below, while the newly made Cardinal seated at table handed his broad red hat about for every one to try on.

No one but the King's boon companion, Baron Flick, knew where the King was going or when he would leave home. No orders had been given, and it was thought that there would be great preparations for the royal journey.

After supper the King was in high spirits, called for a gipsy band in the great hall, and played in it himself, first on the dulcimer and then the zither. Afterwards he and a few of his gentlemen went to a private room where the shutters were closed, and two candles in great silver candlesticks stood lighted on the table, and the King and the Cardinal sat down to a game of backgammon. Now, it was an understood

thing that the King must always win; and when the Cardinal was only a bishop and the King honoured him with a game, he dutifully lost both at cards and backgammon. But to-night, with the broad red hat firmly on his head, he had the hardihood to play a winning game, and the King for the first time experienced the feelings of the vanquished.

'Your Eminence's play has not improved,' said the King dryly as he rose from the table.—'And now, gentlemen, let us play a game in which all may take part. Which of us will put out the candle with bare finger and thumb? Let the Commander-in-Chief try first; he is a brave man.'

'Sire,' said the old soldier, laughing, ''tis a deed of derring-do beyond me. I have hacked my way through a score of battles, but my wife will tell you I have never yet dared to pinch out the light. I have risked my life time and again in the King's service, and at his bidding I must risk even the finger and thumb, so here goes;' and the brave old man stretched out his hand to the candle. But when he felt the burning flame he started back and cried out like a

frightened schoolgirl. There was a roar of laughter.

'I would not have our enemies see thee and thy butter-fingers now for the world,' said the King.

While the Commander-in-Chief was blowing his scorched fingers, the Cardinal tried if he could not snuff out the candle with his delicate finger and thumb. He did better than the soldier, though he failed to put out the light, and only pinched off the top of the wick, which stuck burning to his finger-ends. The Cardinal did not cry out, but said as he wrapped his finger in his handkerchief, 'Rather death by the axe than the stake, if you please.'

The King laughed.

'My Lord Cardinal can win a game that needs no courage and gives no pain. The commander of my army, whose skill and courage have saved his country, succeeds no better than his Eminence. Neither of them dare quench that greasy burning cotton wick 'twixt thumb and finger. I am only a king, and can't hope to do much; but still I may be allowed to try;' and with a confident laugh, the King sprang forward with wide-spread

arms, and pinching out the light of each candle, plunged the room in darkness.

In the laughter and confusion that followed, the King and Baron Flick slipped out of the room, dropping the tapestry over the door, which they silently closed behind them, and hastening down the turret stairs, let themselves out into the moonlight. A groom stood waiting with a couple of swift horses, and as the King put his foot into the stirrup his favourite boarhound Rurick came bounding across the courtyard. He leapt up and put his great paws on his master's shoulders. 'Down, Rurick!' cried the King, and the huge beast crouched before him.

'The hound must not follow me,' said the King to the groom holding his horse.

'Sire, he obeys no one but the King; I cannot call him away.'

The King grasped the great silver collar of the boarhound, bearing the inscription, 'I am Rurick, King Bruno's Boarhound,' and led him into the stables, shut the door upon him, and left him there.

'Rurick is not to be let loose while I am away. He is not to be overfed, and he must be taken a walk daily on the leash;' and the

groom promised obedience to the King's orders. Then, as the King mounted his horse, he said to Baron Flick, 'Rurick would track me from end to end of my kingdom, and through every street in Pomernstadt, so this precaution is by no means needless.' And the two riders set off through the forest, and for some time they heard the stifled baying of the hound in the stable.

'My friends are in darkness about my movements now, if they were never before,' said the King, laughing. 'They will fumble in the tapestry long enough before they find their way out of the room. 'Twas a pleasant game of snuff-candle.'

The King and his companion rode through the thick forest by the light of the moon till they came to a charcoal-burner's hut. The Baron had been there the day before with a few things that he and the King would need; and as they entered he struck a light, and took some bottles from a shelf. From one of them he poured a dark fluid into a basin, and, wetting a sponge in it, stained the fair skin of the King's face, neck, and hands a light brown.

'That's better,' said the Baron, standing back to see the effect of his work. 'No one would

cry out, "The King!" at first glance, though they would at the second, so I must darken that fair hair to match.'

And with the contents of another bottle he dyed the King's hair black. This was a tedious piece of work, and it was dawn before the dark locks were dry and the King and Baron Flick had changed their clothes and dressed themselves as private gentlemen. When all was done no one would have recognised King Bruno in the strange-looking young man with light-blue eyes shining out of his brown face. Then the King and his companion mounted and rode all day till they reached Pomernstadt, the capital of the kingdom.

That evening the King and the Baron supped together joyously at a table on the pavement of the crowded street in front of their inn, the 'Red Eagle.' The King was in wild spirits. He laughed and joked with the waiters, did conjuring tricks with the bread and fruit, made a plum run up his sleeve and come out at his neck, addressed lively remarks to passers-by, and threw bits of meat to strange dogs till they crowded round the table to beg for more.

Baron Flick paid the reckoning, and the King,

forgetting that he must not be known, gave the astonished waiter a couple of gold coins for a *Trink-geld.*

'Sire,' said the Baron, 'if you throw largesse about in this too regal way we are undone. If our holiday is not to be cut short you must entirely forget that you are the King; not forget it one minute and remember it the next. And now, how shall we pass the evening?'

'Let us go to the river,' said the King, 'and take a boat to the Dance Island. I'd give my crown and sceptre for a night's dancing.' And they joined the stream of soldiers, students, townsfolk, and peasants, all hastening in one direction through the crowded streets. The King was in luck. It was a gala night, the island was illuminated, and there would be dancing in the open ballroom to the best gipsy band in the country. The King and Flick took a boat and rowed down the broad stream. As they drew near the island wild strains of music sounded fitfully on the air, and they heard the light, quick footfall of the dancers on the boarded floor under the trees. Thousands of coloured lamps hung among the green boughs, glowing like gems,

and reflecting their soft radiance in the dark river. The King was so eager to land that he leaped ashore and was lost in the crowded gardens before the Baron could follow him. But he knew where he should find him, and when he had moored the boat he hastened to the dancing-floor. The King was not there, and it would have been easy to see him among a hundred wildly waltzing couples, for he was a head taller than any man present. At length the Baron came upon the King standing in front of the orchestra, and watching intently a handsome peasant girl dancing with a heavy, sullen-looking fellow in Tyrolean dress. The girl's dark hair was decked with silver pins set with garnets. She wore a white kerchief, a black velvet bodice with silver chains about it, and a short red skirt, beneath which twinkled the neatest ankles and feet in red stockings and shoes with shining buckles.

'That peasant maiden shall be my partner,' said the King. 'She dances beautifully, and is very handsome, and I shall tell the band what dance to play.'

'Be careful what you do, sire, or you will be found out.'

In a few minutes the King was in animated talk with the conductor of the gipsy band, had made friends with him, and taken the place of one of the band and was performing on the zither as though he had been brought up to do nothing else. When the dance was ended the King talked with the musicians, speaking to each in his own tongue, for there were several nationalities among them; then he took their leader aside and spoke with him.

The bandmaster was already devoted to the charming stranger who spoke his language like a native and played the zither like a musician. It was always the same, whether as king or private citizen—Bruno got his own way, and others did his bidding. At the end of the talk the bandmaster introduced the King to the handsome peasant girl and her parents. The sullen young Tyrolean was not with them at the time.

Then the band struck up the King's favourite dance, and taking his partner by the hand, he led her on the floor. The dance began with a slow, dignified movement, and the band remained seated as they played. If the tall stranger looked like a king in the eyes of his partner, the King had never

danced with any queen more stately or graceful than the peasant maiden by his side. Then the music gradually grew quicker and quicker. The musicians sprang to their feet and played for dear life, and through the rush and maze of twirling dancers the King and the peasant maiden drifted light and quick as thistle-down before the wind.

While the King was dancing Baron Flick found out all about his handsome partner. Her name was Olga; she was famed far and near for her beauty and her dancing, and she was betrothed and shortly to be married to Caspar, the sullen-looking young Tyrolean. Flick managed to tell the King this when the dance was over.

'Stale news, my friend. Olga told me all about everything herself before we had stood up together five minutes.'

'Sire, the Tyrolean has a dangerous temper; I see it in his face. He is frightfully jealous of your dancing with his sweetheart. Could you not dance with some other pretty maiden for a change?'

'Don't try to spoil my fun, Flick. My partner likes me very much indeed. She takes me for

some tremendous potentate, perhaps even mayor of a village. Leave us alone;' and the wilful King twirled Olga away in a quick waltz, while Caspar looked on wrathfully. Olga enjoyed herself as much as did her partner; the only kill-joy was her lover glowering at her.

She sighed and said, 'I think I ought to give poor Caspar the next dance.'

'Do so if you like,' said the King; 'but you will be teaching him that the way to get what he wants is to be cross and angry, and that's a bad lesson for a man to learn. When you're married you can dance with Caspar to your heart's content. This is the first and last time that you and I shall ever dance together. The King himself couldn't have a better partner than you are.'

'Do you know,' said Olga, 'I heard a man say just now as he looked at you, "That tall fellow is very like the King."'

'Did he? I'm no judge of that, for I never saw him,' said the King lightly.

'You never saw the King? Well, he's a good deal taller than you, and looks like a king. But his hair isn't your colour; it's red.'

'Not red—you're mistaken; it's light brown hair,

inclined to yellow,' said her partner. 'At least so I've heard folk say;' and the dance grew so quick that talking stopped, for no one had any breath to spare.

The King and Olga danced together the whole night. When the band had played the last waltz, the musicians had put by their instruments, the coloured lamps were being quenched, and the guests departing, the King led his unwearied partner back to her parents. The old couple, who at home went to bed at half-past eight every night, had been asleep some hours in a summer arbour when the King found them and broke in upon their dreams. But Caspar was nowhere to be seen; and when the tall stranger had left them, Olga's mother scolded her for making her lover so cross.

Midnight sounded from a dozen belfries in Pomernstadt as the last boats, full of tired revellers, left the island. The summer sky was thick-set with brilliant stars, and the moon had just risen. The King and Flick could see their way even where the lamps were put out, and were laughing and talking together as they walked to their boat. They had almost reached the steps on the water's edge when Caspar leapt out of a

thicket and stopped the way. He was pale with passion and his voice shook.

'Who are you, you tall fellow, that have danced all evening with my sweetheart?'

'Who I am is my affair and not yours,' said the King. 'Your sweetheart's parents let me dance with her, and I have just left her in their care. They were asking for you.'

'I tell you I have been laughed at to-night because of you.'

'Oh, get out of the way! I'm going home,' said the King, when Caspar drew the knife from his belt and rushed at him. Baron Flick sprang forward and wrenched the knife from his grasp, and the King, taking Caspar by the collar, flung him sprawling on the ground, but slipped himself on a loose stone, and in trying to regain his footing fell backward into the swift-flowing river.

The King was a fine swimmer, but he was in great peril from the strong current and the breathless state in which he came to the surface after his sudden plunge into cold water. Baron Flick was not a good swimmer, so he ran along the bank in the gray summer night, knowing that, alive or dead, the King must come down

the stream. He shouted for help, and some men who were still putting out the coloured lights came running to his aid.

'A man has fallen into the river—the tall dancer. Twenty thousand kronen to any one who saves the most precious life in Europe!' And two men sprang into the water and swam towards a dark something that floated quickly down the stream.

After a perilous rescue, and deadly anxiety on the part of Baron Flick, the King lay stretched on the ground, insensible but living, by his side his friend, the two men who had saved him, and a fourth man carrying a lantern. As the light fell full on the upturned face there was no longer any doubt as to who the tall dancer might be. The black dye was washed from his hair; and, looking at the well-known features and familiar fair locks, the lantern-bearer took off his hat and said, 'God save the King!'

Baron Flick raised his hat and said, 'God has saved the King, and by your good help, my friends.' The King opened his eyes and looked about him.

'There, that will do,' he said when his cold, wet hand had been kissed by every one. 'And now,

my good fellows, row us back to the city, and as you love me don't spoil my sport by talking of this nonsense till the King has returned from abroad. You understand?'

The men grinned, and said, 'Ay, ay, we'll be whisht as fishes! King Bruno loves his joke!'

Then the King rose to his feet and shook himself like his boarhound after a swim, when the water from his wet clothes flew round him in a shower.

'You wet fellows do the same. And now, row us to Pomernstadt and keep yourselves warm.'

As the boat shot down the stream of the dark river the King said, 'Flick, you were right about the peasant Caspar; he has a vicious temper.' Then he asked what reward had been offered to the men who had saved his life.

'Twenty thousand kronen each, sire.'

'Not too much for so gallant a deed, albeit a big price for such a life as mine.'

Next day the King was none the worse for his ducking, though he spent the morning in his room; but that was only while Flick again dyed his fair hair black.

In the afternoon the King and his companion sat drinking red wine together in front of the Red

Eagle Inn, amusing themselves by watching the market held in the great Platz. The whole space was thick-set with stalls of poultry, fruit, and vegetables, each covered by a great white umbrella like a giant mushroom. Above the strident crowing of cocks and the silly cackle of hens rose a babel of tongues, boastful sellers and depreciating buyers shouting against each other to the accompaniment of clattering wooden shoes on rough cobble-stones.

The King went the round of the market, stirring up laughter and merriment everywhere. He treated the children to fruit, cakes, and toys till their grandmothers said it was as if the blessed Saint Nicholas had come back to visit the earth. Then he bethought him it was time that he made himself a present. But as Bruno was rich even for a king in all beautiful and precious possessions, there was nothing in the wide world he could honestly say that he wished for. So he bought a big basketful of silvery-white onions, because the old woman who sold them reminded him of his grandmother Queen Kunigund on the days when she did not wear her crown. Then, having paid for his onions, he remembered that he could do nothing

with them. He laughed heartily as he pictured Queen Antonia's face if he sent the onions to her as a present. But he got out of his difficulty handsomely.

'Here, mother,' he said to the old stall-keeper; 'keep the onions as well as the money. I daren't take them home; my wife can't bear onions.'

'Heaven help you, noble gentleman, with a housefrau that doesn't love onions!' and the old woman lifted hands and eyes in astonishment.

The King made his way through the thronged market-place, slipping on cabbage-leaves and tripping over turnips and carrots, till he rejoined Baron Flick in front of the 'Red Eagle.' A youth stood near them playing the violin to entertain the guests at the inn; but he played as if he were half-asleep, and did not mark the time properly. This was more than the King could endure. He stretched out a long arm over the youth's shoulder and quietly took away his violin and bow. The young man looked up in a fury to see who had done this; but the appearance and manner of the tall, light-eyed, black-haired man quenched his anger. He felt only astonishment beyond words.

The King rapidly retuned the violin, and then played in masterly style the tune that the youth was murdering. It was the first music-lesson the poor fellow had ever had, and he listened eagerly. A crowd gathered round the tall musician, men, women, and children, poor folk and rich folk, held spell-bound.

When he drew the bow across the strings at the last note all were silent for a moment, then they applauded loudly. The King bowed, took off his cap, and gravely handed it round. A shower of small coins was quickly thrown into it, and Baron Flick dropped in a silver crown. Then the King gave the money, together with his violin, to the amazed youth, who had never before earned as much in a month by his music.

'There, younker,' said the King, 'learn to play the violin like that, and you'll not only make your living but give joy to yourself and to your hearers.'

Among the crowd that had gathered round the tall violin-player was the manager of the big theatre in Pomernstadt. He asked permission to sit at the same table with the musician and his friend, and they talked together over their wine. Herr Klip

was the gentleman's name, and he praised the King's violin-playing very warmly.

'I am wanting a new first-fiddle for my band,' said he; 'and after hearing you play I have no hesitation in offering you the post.'

'I should like it of all things, but unfortunately I live a long way from here, and am already settled in a business that takes up all my time,' said the King.

Herr Klip bewailed his ill-luck, and then they talked of other things. Presently he said that he was in a desperate fix. His best actor, who was to have played the part of the king in an historical play at the big theatre the following week, had fallen ill. There was no one to take his place; without him the play could not be performed, and the loss and disappointment would be very great.

'I can help you out of that difficulty,' said the King.

'What! are you actor as well as musician?' said Herr Klip.

'Oh, I have often played the part of a king—more or less successfully, I believe.'

'You're a strange fellow! If you act as well

as you play I shan't fear to engage you for once in a way.—Have you ever seen your friend act?' said Herr Klip, turning to the Baron.

'Yes, I've seen him as a king repeatedly. It doesn't do to praise a man to his face; but I think he makes a very good king.'

'In what plays have you seen him act?'

'I've often seen him to very great advantage in a play called *The Privy Council,* and in two excellent farces, *Backgammon and the Cardinal* and *The Commander-in-Chief and the Candle.*'

'Dear Flick! good Flick!' said the King under his breath.

The bargain was struck, and while Herr Klip went to fetch the book of the play, Flick said to the King:

'Sire, you must own that I came gallantly to your help just now; but it is imperative you act only on condition that there is no rehearsal. You would be found out to a certainty by a dozen curious men and women at close quarters.'

'But I don't want to spoil their play for them.'

'You must manage it somehow, sire; you are conferring a favour, and can name your own terms.'

In the end, after a hot dispute with Herr Klip, it was settled that there was to be no rehearsal of the King's part. The new actor gave his name as Herr Schwarzhaar, and so it was printed on the play-bill.

'Well, sire, I hope you like the thought of what you've undertaken,' said the Baron when they were alone again.

'I do, very much,' said the King calmly. 'If I can't play king to the life, who have been a king since my babyhood, who can?'

The sick actor was a rather short man, and new clothes had to be made for Herr Schwarzhaar, who was too tall for the theatrical suit of the stage-king. He feared that he was found out when the tailor who measured him said, 'Here is a strange thing, Herr Schwarzhaar! Your measurements are the very same as King Bruno's, for my master wrote them down and I have them by heart.'

'What! have I the honour to have clothes made by a tailor who works for the King?' and he skilfully turned the talk into praise of King Bruno so that he might hear what the tailor would say about him.

The night came when Herr Schwarzhaar was to make his appearance in public. The theatre was full, and Baron Flick had the best place in the house, in front of the pit.

His heart beat fast when King Bruno came upon the stage. Surely his own subjects must know him. His unusual and noble figure, his proud step, the light, bright eyes, the straight nose and strong chin, the movements of his hands accompanying his speech, familiar to every one who had talked with the King—all these must betray him. And his voice! Who else had such a voice as the King, with as many changes of tone as he had changes of mood. Baron Flick looked round the audience, and thought, 'Where are their eyes and ears and senses, that they don't recognise before them the most marked personality in the country?'

But no one present could possibly expect to see a real king tricked out on the stage as a tinsel king. The time and the place where we expect to see a person have more to do with our recognising him than we think, and no one knew King Bruno, though Baron Flick overheard some remarks from a man behind him that made him tremble.

'That Herr Schwarzhaar, whoever he may be, is like a caricature of the King.'

'Not a bit! It's a poor compliment to the King to compare that shambling figure with his,' replied his friend.

'Well, I saw the King quite lately walking in the street with that big boarhound of his at his heels, and if this fellow had light hair instead of dark, he might easily pass for an ugly brother of the King's. Where the likeness breaks down is in manner and action. One can see very well that Schwarzhaar knows nothing about kings. But then they're the sort of person one doesn't meet every day.'

The Baron had never been so interested in his life. He saw the King on the stage in all his natural dignity and fine simplicity. He was not acting; he was simply himself a king. That was why there was but little applause. The real King did not follow the traditions of the stage-king, and the audience, missing the usual rendering of the character, was puzzled and silent.

In the last act the King was surrounded by kneeling women imploring him to have mercy on their husbands and sons whom he had taken prisoners

of war. It was very touching, and the audience enjoyed its feelings very much, and handkerchiefs were everywhere in readiness for the expected tears, when a loud, hollow bark was heard, and the King's great boarhound Rurick leaped on the stage, wild with joy to have found his master at last, safe and sound. He knocked down the group of supplicating ladies like so many nine-pins, and bounded over their prostrate, shrieking forms. 'Down, Rurick!' cried the King furiously, as the huge beast leaped up, and with one lick of his tongue wiped the paint off the King's face. Every breath was a deafening bark, and as the excited hound swung about the stage, with a single brush of his tail he put out half-a-dozen footlights. Herr Klip then appeared with a whip; but the King cried out, 'The hound will have you by the throat if you touch him!' and he retreated hastily.

Then the audience all over the house rose as one man. The unexpected appearance and behaviour of the well-known royal boarhound opened their eyes, and they recognised in the stage-king their own eccentric and beloved King Bruno. The band played the national anthem,

every one cheered, and the King dashed behind the scenes in his brass crown and tinsel robes, leaving Rurick in possession of the stage. Amid peals of laughter, the faithful hound came well to the front, wagging his tail and barking good-temperedly, pleased to be the object of so much attention. A sharp whistle from his master in the background called him away, and the curtain fell on an empty stage.

Baron Flick fought his way through the crowd to the back of the theatre in search of the King. But he and Rurick had already fled. Every one was laughing and shouting with excitement, and soon the King's wild escapade would be the talk of the town. Flick ran back to the 'Red Eagle,' where the King, wearing a long cloak over his stage finery, and closely followed by Rurick, had just arrived. As soon as they were safely in their room the King locked the door, leaned his back against it, and laughed till he was tired.

'O Flick, if you could only have seen the faces of the kneeling ladies when Rurick burst in upon us and threw them down in heaps! It was worth making a fool of one's self to see such a sight.'

Flick could not agree with his master, so he only said, 'Sire, you will want to know who disobeyed your orders at the Forest Schloss and let the boarhound loose.'

'Yes, some one will be punished for it. Whoever it was has certainly brought my holiday to an untimely end. Poor, faithful Rurick has let the cat out of the bag, and every Tom Fool in the town sets me down as the King of Fools;' and turning to the big boarhound, the King said the same words as Sir Isaac Newton was destined a hundred years later to say to his dog, 'Thou little knowest the mischief thou hast done!' And the faithful Rurick, who thought that his master was praising him, gave a proud wag of his tail and swept the inkstand off the table.

Meanwhile strange things were happening at the Forest Schloss. When the Queen came down to breakfast on the morning that the King's holiday began, she was astonished to find that he and Baron Flick had fled in the night. So well had the secret been kept that even the royal cook suspected nothing, and had sent up a dish of venison chops for the King's breakfast, which the Queen, as Regent, ate for him.

Directly after breakfast she called a Privy Council to impress the great officers of State with her new dignity. She solemnly read aloud to them, as though it were news, the paper they themselves had drawn up and the King had signed, conferring sovereign power upon her during King Bruno's absence.

Then the Queen felt it due to herself to address them in this manner: 'The King has very wisely deputed to me his sovereign power, for the exercise of which I am singularly fitted by inheritance and capacity.' Then followed a remark that the Queen made regularly every twenty-four hours: 'For I am descended from one of the oldest reigning houses, and but for the ridiculous Salic law I should at this moment be a mighty Empress, seated on the throne of my ancestors, now occupied by my miserable little boy-cousin.' Surprise and sympathy were expressed by the Council, and they wished the King's holiday was over.

The Queen Regent entered joyfully on the exercise of her powers. She harassed every one in the Castle. From the Prime Minister to the kitchen-maid, each felt the weight of her hand.

She wore the King's crown all day long like a bonnet, with ribbon-strings tied in a bow under her chin, and her appearance inspired awe. She instituted early hours for every member of the household, and sent them all to bed with the poultry to enable them to rise with the lark. She banished the King's playfellows, who were doing nothing sadly in his absence as a change from doing nothing joyously in his company. She had all the carpets taken up and beaten, and the Prime Minister, the Cardinal, and the Commander-in-Chief went about sneezing in the dust that was raised by a regiment of charwomen.

The King had been away a fortnight, and his friends were counting the days to his return, when, as the Queen sat embroidering with her maidens, a page entered the room and said that a peasant from Tyrol wished to speak with her.

'The man must send his message,' said the Queen, without looking up, as she bit off her thread.

'He cannot, madam; he says it is for the Queen's ear only.'

The Queen ordered the man to be taken to her own sitting-room, and rising from her work,

tied her crown-strings tighter, and entered her boudoir majestically. There stood Caspar, and when he saw the Queen he made so deep a bow that he swept the floor with his green felt hat.

The Queen seated herself in a chair of state; the peasant stood uneasily before her, shuffling his feet as though the floor were hot.

'Your name?' said the Queen.

'Caspar Klinck, peasant, if it please your Majesty.'

'Your errand?'

'My loyalty has brought me hither, madam. I have come to tell you I have cause to fear that all is not well with the King.'

'It is impossible that you can know anything about the King,' said the Queen haughtily. 'His Majesty is abroad over the seas, and I am the Queen Regent in his absence, an office for which I am peculiarly fitted by inheritance and capacity. For I am descended from one of the oldest reigning houses, and but for that ridiculous Salic law I should be a great Empress, seated on the throne of my ancestors, now occupied by my miserable little boy-cousin.'

Caspar looked bewildered.

'You do not understand what that ridiculous law is, my good fellow,' said the Queen. 'The Salic law is made on purpose to prevent women from ruling.'

A broad grin spread over the peasant's heavy face.

'An it please your Majesty, every man in our valley would like to live under that law;' and seeing the Queen frown, Caspar stopped short.

'Fellow, you are wasting my time, and the State will suffer for it. Say quickly what you have to say.'

'It is this, madam. You think that King Bruno is abroad; but he's no farther off than Pomernstadt, going about with dyed hair and disguised as a common citizen. But folks know the King, I can tell you!'

'You must be mad,' said the Queen.

'Madam, if any one is mad, judge if it be not his most sacred Majesty's own afflicted self. There's something wrong here;' and Caspar tapped his forehead mysteriously. 'A fortnight ago, at a festa on the Dance Island, the King danced, without stopping, the night through with my sweetheart, no one knowing that he was the

King. Afterwards, to my surprise, he attacked me furiously, and his royal foot slipping, hi! plump he falls backward into the river. I, presently coming to my senses after my hammering, overheard Baron Flick and the men who fished the King out of the river talking, and that was how I learned it was my own too gracious Sovereign that had half-killed me.'

'Can this be true?' said the Queen.

'Sad, sober truth it is, madam; and I, knowing how gracious a prince he is, am forced to believe that he was out of his royal mind when he so mishandled his innocent, unworthy subject. The attack on myself is a small matter perhaps; but the whole land would cry shame were it known that King Bruno was seen playing the fiddle in the Platz, and afterwards handing his royal hat round for pence. Also, a waiter at the Red Eagle Inn, to whom the King betrayed himself by giving him two gold pieces for a *Trink-geld*, swears that he saw the King's most gracious Majesty chaffering for onions with an old woman in the market.'

At this the Queen Regent partially swooned, but recovering, pointed to a silver bell on the table, and said faintly, 'Ring!' When the page

opened the door the Queen bade him fetch the Prime Minister, the Cardinal, and the Commander-in-Chief. The Cardinal and the old warrior were with her directly; but the Prime Minister was out hunting. The Queen briefly repeated to them Caspar's astounding story, while the peasant swore to the truth of every detail.

The Commander-in-Chief looked at Caspar from under his grizzled eyebrows.

'Madam, we must have proof of what this fellow says before we believe him. What he states may be true, for many kings before King Bruno have taken their pastime mingling unknown among their people as one of them. But his story halts; it does not go on all-fours. When was the King, the most gracious of Sovereigns, ever guilty of an unprovoked assault on an innocent man?—No, Master Caspar, if that assault ever really took place, depend upon it you had done something that richly deserved it.'

When Caspar heard that he turned white and his knees smote together. The Commander-in-Chief opened the window and whistled loudly, and in a couple of minutes four soldiers clanked up the stairs to the Queen's boudoir. He opened the door and

bade them secure the peasant Caspar Klinck in the guard-room till further orders.

Then the old man turned to the Queen. 'Madam, this fellow is best kept under lock and key. If he is lying, he has uttered a base slander, and he will be punished for it; if he speaks truth, the King shall deal with him on his return as he thinks fit, for betraying the King's secret.'

'I have myself thought the King very peculiar of late, and that a prolonged regency might even be necessary,' said the Queen. 'Perhaps it will be my duty to have a consultation of physicians held on the King's mental state.'

'A consultation of fiddlesticks!' said the old soldier angrily.

Then the Cardinal said gently, 'You must allow me to bear evidence of the King's excellent mental health, madam, for on the very night on which he left home he showed a thoroughly sane objection to be beaten at backgammon.'

The old soldier laughed uproariously.

'Ay, ay; and the King was the bravest and the sanest of us all when we burnt our fingers playing hot snuffikins!'

'Hot what?' said the Queen, with a pained expression.

'Snuffikins, madam! snuffikins! You take a lighted candle and you pinch the burning wick, so, with your finger and thumb, and out goes the light. Doesn't sound much; but the King was the only one of us who dared to do it.'

'All this only confirms me in my opinion. The King had better come home at once,' said the Queen. 'I think it my duty as Regent to send a squadron of cavalry this afternoon, with two heavy guns, a regiment of foot, two surgeons, two physicians, one barber, and one apothecary, to the "Red Eagle" to escort my poor consort home before further scandal arise.'

'Madam, you mistake your powers altogether. It is for you and me to await the King's return here. I should forfeit my head as well as my self-respect if I so far overstepped my duty as a subject,' said the Commander-in-Chief gravely.

'Well, then, if you will not have him fetched home as befits a king, let Rurick be loosed, and if the peasant speaks truth and the King is indeed in Pomernstadt, the boarhound will soon track his master,' said the Queen.

'No, madam,' said the King's faithful servant. 'The King left orders that the hound was not to be loosed in his absence, and neither you nor I may disobey the King's expressed command.'

But the Queen had made up her obstinate mind. In the morning she ordered the boarhound to be let loose, and the frightened groom gave the Queen the key of the stable where Rurick lived, to do with it as she liked. There and then, with the crown tied on her head, she proceeded to unlock and open the stable-door, and out bounded Rurick, knocking her down and leaping over her on his joyous way. The Queen picked herself up, observing as she shook the dust from her dress, 'It ever happens thus to those who try to do their duty.'

We know what use Rurick made of his freedom; how he tracked his master to the capital, and ran him to earth that very night on the stage of the great theatre. When the King woke in the morning he almost thought and quite hoped that his unpleasant adventure was only a bad dream. But there lay the great boarhound asleep and snoring by the bedside, and he knew that it was all too true. When he looked out of the

window, to his angry surprise a guard of honour was posted in front of the inn, and a crowd gathered to catch sight of the King.

The King called Baron Flick and told him what to do, and he went out to the soldiers and asked their officer by whose orders they were sent there.

'By the Queen Regent's,' he replied.

Then said Flick, 'Take yourselves back to your barracks by the King's orders;' and they departed crestfallen.

'The game is up, Flick; my pleasant holiday is spoiled. After breakfast we'll mount our horses, get off quietly from the back of the house, and home to the Forest Schloss. At least it will be some comfort to punish the rascally groom who let Rurick loose. If I'm to have my own boar-hound set to track me like a criminal, I'll make a present of him to the Czar of Russia, and be quit of him.'

The King and Flick rode together in gloomy silence, Rurick proudly bounding along by his master's stirrup. In the afternoon they reached the charcoal-burner's hut once more, where Flick washed the black dye from the King's fair hair and the brown stain from his skin, and

both put on the clothes they had left there a fortnight before.

'Let us press on, Flick,' said the King; 'I am keen-set for food. We shall reach the Schloss in time for supper, which I hope will be a good one; but I fear me, for ladies when alone are apt to live on cabbage and toast and water. But whatever the Queen may drink, we will have a bottle of the old Rhenish wine that the Bishop of Metz gave my father the King, of blessed memory.'

At length the two riders clattered into the courtyard of the Schloss in the sunshine of a midsummer evening. But there were no grooms waiting to take their horses; the doors were all shut, windows closed, and curtains drawn.

'*Himmel!*' cried the King, 'is every one dead and buried? Has the plague broken out in the Schloss?' and he leapt from his horse and rang a mighty peal on the big bell at the great door. When the echo died away no sound was heard but the cawing of rooks and the squealing of swifts. Then the door was timidly opened by one of the under-servants, and the King stepped into the hall.

'What's the matter with the place? Have you

turned the Schloss into a nunnery or a madhouse since I left?' he asked angrily.

The man bowed low and replied, 'Sire, the Queen Regent has us all in bed by half-past eight in the evening, so that she may have us all out of bed by half-past four in the morning.'

'What, man! all abed by daylight? It may save candles, but it wastes precious time. Go, call every varlet of you up to get my supper;' and the King put his horn to his lips and blew a series of blasts in the great hall that brought all in the Castle from their rooms, dressed as they were. For, though the Queen had sent them upstairs, she could not compel them to undress and go to bed in the sunshine.

The King ran up the grand staircase two steps at a time, the boarhound at his heels, and knocked loudly at the Queen's door. The Queen Regent opened it herself; but when she saw Rurick with the King she stepped back and screamed. And the King stepped back without screaming when he saw the Queen wearing his big regal crown tied on like a bonnet with a bow under the chin.

'Take that ridiculous object off your usurping head this moment,' said the King. 'You're a

laughing-stock for men and angels! Make haste to end this folly and be a reasonable woman once more.'

'Reasonable I have always been; it is not I who have been playing the madman abroad, sire.'

'No, madam, for you have been too busy playing the mad woman at home. Who loosed my boarhound and set him on my track? Tell me that.'

'I loosed Rurick to find the King of this unhappy country before your wild tricks became common talk. A Tyrolean peasant, Caspar Klinck, came to tell me that you were masquerading in Pomernstadt in disguise, and acting like a madman at large.'

The King's anger was terrible. He grasped the Queen's wrist as though he would crush it.

'You, the Queen—you, the daughter of kings—you stooped to believe and to listen to a base peasant carl slander your husband, the King of a mighty land, and condemned him unheard! You loosed the boarhound to track me like a criminal!' and he flung her hand from him. 'You, who loosed the hound, may fasten him up when you please;' and the King swung out of the room,

slamming the door behind him, and leaving the terrified Queen alone with Rurick.

The Castle was strangely silent and empty. The King went to the Cardinal's room in the far tower, and broke in upon a pleasant card-party consisting of the Cardinal, the Prime Minister, and the Commander-in-Chief.

The three gentlemen threw down their cards with delight, and rose to receive the King.

'Thank God you have returned, sire!' said the Prime Minister.

'A fortnight more of this Regency, sire, would have turned this orderly kingdom into a gigantic lunatic asylum,' said the old soldier.

'Yet we deeply regret the King's holiday has been cut short,' purred the Cardinal.

Then the King began to feel happier, and asked them to sup with him in his room. 'For,' said he, 'you've been having a sorry time of it. But where are my friends that I left here: my exquisite Max, my genial Boris, my witty Otto, my gallant Rudolf—all my playfellows, in short?'

No one answered the King. Then the bluff old soldier said, 'Sire, the Queen Regent banished all your companions the very day after you left.'

He saw the Queen wearing his big regal crown tied on like a bonnet with a bow under the chin.

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The King's light eyes flashed blue lightning.

At supper the King, Cardinal, Prime Minister, Commander-in-Chief, and Baron Flick by turns laughed and stormed over the events of the Regency. The old soldier told the King all that Caspar had said to the Queen of his supposed madness, adding that when the peasant gave a fearful account of the King's violent assault, 'I said to him, "You rogue, depend upon it you had richly earned it."' Then the King told the whole story of his adventures on the Dance Island from beginning to end, and wound up with Rurick's gallant rescue of his master on the stage; and they laughed till they fell into each other's arms.

Suddenly they stopped laughing to listen. There was a great opening and shutting of doors below, and rushings to and fro, and they heard Rurick barking like thunder.

'Go and see what all this hurly-burly means,' said the King; 'I am sick of excursions and alarms in my own home.' And the old soldier, with hand on his sword-hilt and snorting for battle, rushed from the room.

It was some time before the din was quieted; but at last the Commander-in-Chief returned.

'Sire, I have witnessed the closing act of the Regency. The Queen, believing you to be mad, and also anxious to prolong the term of her power, ordered two doctors to await your return hither, and pronounce upon your condition. They arrived, accompanied by six stout attendants in case your Majesty proved violent, and I have just had the pleasure of bidding Rurick clear the house of the whole pack, and he has done it.'

'And all this coil has sprung from a thick-headed peasant's jealousy and spite!' said the King. 'When Caspar knew it was I whom he had tried to kill, to save his own skin he came to the Queen Regent with this precious story of the King's madness. That chimed in with the Queen's own ambition; and as she has never understood my whimsical moods, she honestly believed me to be a mad king, which is a dangerous kind of animal. And seeing in my extremity her own opportunity, she has prepared to have me quietly shut up and put out of the way. But enough of that.' Then turning to the Prime Minister, 'To-morrow I sign a paper condemning the peasant Caspar Klinck to lifelong banishment for the attempted murder of his liege lord the King.'

The sentence was carried out; and when Olga knew what her sweetheart had done she said, 'Never will I marry the man who has lifted a murderous hand against the King!' and she married somebody else instead. Olga and the King never met again; but the beautiful peasant maiden lived to a great age, and boasted to each fresh generation as it sprang up that she had once waltzed a whole summer night through with King Bruno, the King of Dancers and Prince of Partners.

A much more serious matter for the King was how to deal with the Queen after her outrageous folly. But she herself helped him out of the difficulty. She entered the royal presence carrying the King's crown on a cushion, and said solemnly, 'Your Majesty, in yielding up the power you entrusted me with, for which by inheritance and capacity I am singularly fitted, I also return you its symbol. During my short Regency I have been misunderstood and maligned for my efforts to save the country from a great danger and to establish a firm and stable government.'

'Oh, go on!' said the King, impatiently putting on his crown.

'I have decided to pay a prolonged visit to my own country, where but for the ridiculous Salic law I should be a great Empress, seated on the throne of my ancestors, now occupied by my miserable little boy-cousin.'

'Oh yes, I know all that. Go and help your young cousin to rule his kingdom, and see how he will like it.'

'At least, sire, I will go where a conscientious sense of duty is appreciated,' said the Queen with dignity as she left the room.

So the Queen went, and then the King's holiday began.

The Child that Dropped from the Clouds.

Which is the true-born royal child?
Nor King nor Court can tell,
The low-born youth with manners mild,
Doth act the prince so well.

And which the true-born peasant lass?
Nor hind nor swain can say,
When royal maiden mows the grass
And helps to toss the hay.

The Princess by the peasant bred
Finds joy in homely ways,
And wheresoe'er her steps are led,
Remembers simple days.

ONCE upon a time there lived a King who was interested in so many things that he forgot to marry till his beard was gray, and he would not have thought of it then had not the Prime Minister brought him a great petition, signed by thousands of his subjects, praying him to give them a Queen without delay. Then King Olaf sent messengers to the neighbouring countries to ask the names and ages of all the royal Princesses. When the list was brought to him he glanced at it, and taking a pin, pricked the name of Princess Fiorablonda, aged sixteen, saying as he did so, 'I will take the youngest at a venture.'

Whereupon King Olaf wrote a letter to the

young Princess's father demanding her hand in marriage; and as he now realised there was no time to be lost, added that he wished the wedding to take place in his own capital on the following Wednesday week. The King was highly delighted with the offer for his daughter, and sent at once for Princess Fiorablonda. She left the schoolroom in the middle of a rule of three sum that she never finished, to be told that she was grown-up, and that the great King Olaf had chosen her for his Queen.

Then the young Princess wept and said, 'King Olaf is older than my father, and he has a gray beard.'

But her mother replied, 'Nonsense, child! Have you never heard it is better to be an old man's darling than a young man's slave? Don't you know that young queens rule old kings, and isn't gray as good as any other colour for a beard? Only think, child, you will wear a crown half-a-yard high, and when the lesser kings do homage to King Olaf your own father will kneel before you! There's a prospect for a young maiden who only half-an-hour ago was rapped over the knuckles in the schoolroom! Cheer up at once.'

And when Princess Fiorablonda saw the beautiful presents that King Olaf had sent her, the jewels and robes, and the crystal coach that was to take her into his kingdom, she dried her eyes and thought no more of whether her bridegroom's beard was gray or brown.

On the following Wednesday week the old King married the young Princess. Never was there so magnificent a wedding, and the people rejoiced and said, 'Now that we have a Queen we shall surely have a Crown Prince!' But all things came late to King Olaf. It was ten long years before the Queen had a child, and by that time the King's gray beard had become a white beard.

Queen Fiorablonda was gentle and timid, and never lost her fear of her old husband, who was also a cross old husband. She greatly dreaded his anger if a daughter should be born when the King wished for a son, whom he might himself instruct in kingcraft to rule the people after his death. The Queen grew so sad and frightened that the nurse who was with her asked what it was that distressed her. Then the Queen opened her heart to her nurse and spoke of all her trouble.

The nurse was a wicked and cunning woman, and gave the Queen bad advice.

'It is well that you have told me what makes you so unhappy,' she said; 'for should your child be a daughter I can put everything right for you, and please both you and the King. But you must do as I tell you. I have a sister, a poor washer-woman, and she has a baby to spare, a little son born this very morning not half a mile from here. Her husband died only a month ago. This little one is her tenth child, and she would never miss it among so many, so that if your Majesty needs a son for reasons of State, here is the very thing ready to hand. My sister is so poor that she would give you the child for ten gold pieces a year, and be content with the bargain. Of course I shall never tell her who wants the child, for what she doesn't know, that she can't talk about. But I must have much more money than my washerwoman sister, because it is I who have thought of this clever way of helping you. It is all my cleverness, and brains are things you can't buy in the market; they are much too rare and costly.'

'I hope that I may have a son of my own,'

said the Queen, 'and that I shall not need to beg or buy one. But I am frightened to death at the thought of disappointing the King with a daughter, for he would never forgive me. And are you sure that if I sent a little girl of my own away she would be in a kind home?' and the Queen began to cry.

'Save your tears and keep your pretty looks, my Queen. Never fear but she will be happy. A friend of mine shall take her to a worthy pair who live in the country and long for a child of their own. They will adopt her, and I promise you they will pet and pamper her till she won't be fit to speak to.' And the Queen was comforted.

That night a Princess was born. Before any one heard of it the wicked nurse, who had her nephew ready in case he was wanted, asleep in a bag among her wide skirts, laid him in the Queen's arms, and slipped the little girl into the empty bag. Then she sent for King Olaf and the Ministers of State to see the new-born heir-apparent.

The King was delighted with the young Crown Prince. He presented the baby himself on a golden

tray to the great lords and courtiers. 'A brave Prince,' said he, 'and the breathing image of my father the late King. See, the little one has the hand and chin distinctive of our Royal House for hundreds of years!'

When the Queen heard this she felt how wicked she was to deceive her husband. But it was too late to undo the evil deed, though she nearly cried out aloud, 'Give me back my own dear little girl, and send that boy away. He's none of ours!' She knew that if she confessed she would be put to death, and fear kept her from owning what fear had led her to do.

The baby Princess was carried in the bag through the back-door of her father's palace, and taken to a friend of the nurse's. She was fed and well cared for till she was strong enough to be sent far away into the country to her future home.

King Olaf, who had always neglected his young Queen, since she had presented him with an heir loaded her with beautiful gifts. But jewels that would formerly have delighted Queen Fiorablonda now distressed her, for she knew that they were hers under false pretences, and were only given to her as the mother of the Crown Prince.

'Queen, you must rouse yourself,' said the wicked nurse. 'Why are you not pleased with the King's rich presents? I would sell myself into slavery with the Turk to wear such jewels in my hair. And you must seem to love the little Crown Prince more. You must kiss him and praise him like a real mother. The King is beginning to notice it. Only the other day I heard him say, "Poor child! it is well that thou hast a father to care for thee, for thou hast but a cold-hearted mother."'

'Silence, terrible woman!' said the Queen. 'What will you take to go away from me, so that I may never again set eyes on your hateful face?'

Then the nurse bargained for a rope of pearls of untold value, the King's latest present to the Queen, and said that if the Queen would give her that she would never trouble her Majesty again.

'And you will never tell of this wicked thing that we have done?' said the poor frightened Queen.

'We indeed! It is not I who have passed off another woman's child on my husband as my own. Those were your doings, Queen! I have only to speak, and you would be beheaded!'

'Yes; but remember your ugly head, too, would fall from your shoulders for your share in the work,' said the Queen.

The wicked nurse laughed. 'No bribe nor fear would tie my tongue if I chose to speak. Ambition will keep me silent. I want to see my own nephew on the throne of this kingdom, and be own aunt to a royal monarch. And from henceforth every king and prince of the Royal House will be descended from my sister the washerwoman and my father the scavenger out of work! That's something like an ancestry if you will!' And the odious creature tied the rope of pearls round her thick waist and departed, and the poor Queen gave a shriek and fainted.

The supposed Crown Prince grew into a strong, clever boy, and the old King doted on him. 'Never did prince take after his father's family as my son does,' he said proudly. 'See how he steps! It is like Sebastian the Eighteenth entering a room. He has the very gestures of his grandfather, Dominic the Eleventh, and little odd fancies such as the Royal House has always been celebrated for. It is a curious thing, but the Crown Prince has such a horror of the smell of

soap-suds that I believe it would make him ill even to blow soap-bubbles!'

And now we must see what befell the little Princess after she was hustled out of the back-door of her father's palace.

In a distant part of the King's country there dwelt a farmer and his wife, who, like King Olaf and Queen Fiorablonda, had long wished in vain for a child. But the King only wanted an heir for ambition's sake, and would not have said 'Thank you' for a daughter, while Hans and Theckla longed only for a child to love. They found the house painfully clean and silent, with neither mark nor sound of little shoes trotting up and down stairs, nor thump of cradle-rockers on the beeswaxed floors. Theckla begged her husband to let her bring up some poor child as their own; but though he was sorry that they had no babies, it did not make him wish for other people's.

'No, wife,' he said, 'you can't make-believe that other folks' children are the same as your own. And if you took to one, just when you'd learnt to love it heartily its own parents might come and claim it, and say that all the good you'd taught it was inherited from them, and all the

bad it had learnt from you. Better put up with your disappointment, wife; it's a thankless task bringing up other folks' children. You may take my word for that.'

Theckla envied the very animals that had young ones to love: the mare in the meadow with a foal by her side mounted on legs as long as his mother's, the red cow with a pink-nosed calf that drank gallons of milk, and the dull ewes with sprightly lambs to enliven them. She even envied the white sow with ten clever, nimble piglets that, it seemed, could never grow up to be rude and greedy pigs. All the beasts had their young ones to play with and protect; the mistress of the farm only was childless.

One winter's night Hans and Theckla sat down to supper, tired and hungry. It was wild and stormy without, and they closed and barred the shutters and lighted a candle. The wood-fire on the hearth shed a bright glow about the kitchen, and cast a big flickering shadow of Theckla's spinning-wheel on the wall. The table stood in front of the fire; and as they were about to begin their comfortable hot supper, the wife said, 'There's food enough here for a whole family,

'It's the most beautiful baby in the world!'

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Hans. How I wish we'd half-a-dozen children to share it with us!'

'So don't I, wife,' said the farmer. 'There's all the more for you and me.'

A gust of wind came roaring down the wide chimney, driving before it a cloud of smoke and white wood-ash. The dog jumped up and barked; the cat rose and stepped backward with an offended expression; the farmer and his wife choked and sneezed, and each took another sausage.

'Hans,' said his wife, 'we've saved five gold pieces this year, and we've neither chick nor child to leave it to. If only we had a family like other folks!'

'What a woman you be!' said Hans. 'You've only one idea in your head, and that you can't keep to yourself. You're always on about having no children; and stale news too, for we've known it well these fourteen years past. You're enough to wear a saint to fiddle-strings.'

At this Theckla put down her knife and fork and was getting ready to cry, when a bellowing gust of wind struck the side of the house till it shook, doors slammed, shutters flapped, the rusty weather-vane on the roof squeaked and grated as

it twirled like a cockchafer on a pin, and the boughs of the big trees groaned and cracked. The fire was blown about the hearth, and puffs of smoke came rolling down the chimney. Theckla was so scared that instead of crying she said a prayer, and before she got as far as 'Amen' the wind hushed and there came a lull.

In the sudden calm they heard the cry of a young child, and the startled couple sprang to their feet. The dog, Spot, barked and scratched at the door, eager to rush into the open air and trace the cry to its source.

'O Hans! don't you hear? It's a child's cry! Open the door this minute!'

But Hans was not quick enough for his wife, and before he could cross the floor she had unbolted the heavy door and thrown it wide open. There in the porch at their feet was a big basket, creaking from movements within, and from it came the loud cry of a healthy, hungry baby. The dog whined and sniffed about the basket, while Theckla, wild with joy, lifted it and its precious contents in her arms. Hans shut and barred the door after her, saving the candle from being blown out, for the wind was beginning to roar again.

'Put the basket on the table, wife. To judge from the noise, there's either a cat or a child in it.'

'A cat, you silly man!' said Theckla, lifting the lid of the basket with one hand while she held back the dog with the other. 'Cat, indeed! It's the most beautiful baby in the world!' And there, sure enough, among soft wrappings, lay a very young and pretty girl-baby. Theckla had it out of its basket-bed in a moment and covered it with kisses. 'Oh, you darling! Oh, you little love!'

'Yes, wife, you're right,' said Hans. 'It's a child—a child dropped from the clouds.' And the wind shook the door and whistled through the keyhole.

'It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good,' said Theckla, clasping the child; 'it has blown this little darling into our house.'

'Now, wife, be reasonable. Not the wind but good, stout arms and legs brought that child here in its basket, and put it in the porch; and I and Spot will go and seek the man or woman that left it here. They can't be far off, and we must make 'em take it away again.'

'No, no, Hans! Any one that could forsake a heavenly duck like this isn't fit to have charge of it. It's what I've been pining for these fourteen years, and now it's dropped from the clouds into my lap, here it shall stay.'

Hans whistled to the dog, and they went out together in the roaring wind. Then Theckla made some milk warm and fed the baby, and she examined it and its clothing, seeking for any token by which it might be known again by those who had forsaken it. But there was nothing. The child was simply clad, and its little body clear of mark or blemish that could serve to identify it in the future.

The farmer and Spot soon returned. It was plain to be seen that they had failed in their quest, for the man looked sullen and the hound ashamed.

'We should have come on their traces sure enough,' said Hans; 'but the scent won't lie in such a wind. The dog's not to blame.' And Theckla laughed with joy.

'Thank Heaven, Hans! now we can keep the baby for our own. We've bread enough and to spare; and only think what trouble it saves us

to have a ready-made baby brought to the very door!'

'Not so fast, wife. We may be let in for a peck of trouble. I'm not so fond of other folks' children;' and Hans tried to harden his heart against the little outcast.

Then Theckla, having come to the end of her entreaties, held the baby towards her husband to plead its own cause; and the weak little hands in their wandering movements clasped one of his big fingers. The farmer's face grew red, and he dared not move for fear of hurting the tiny hands whose touch had softened his heart. Then he broke out suddenly.

'You may keep it, wife. I'm an old fool. I say one thing one minute and another the next. Yes, you may keep the little wench.'

And Theckla kissed her husband's red cheek and said, 'You're a good man, Hans. Heaven will never let you be sorry for this night's work. And now that I've got a baby to love, I'm as happy as our good Queen with her little Crown Prince, and envy no woman alive.'

The child that dropped from the clouds was duly christened and called Bettina, after Theckla's

mother; for she said, 'What more can one do for a babe than give it one's own dear mother's name?'

The little Bettina grew up a good-tempered and lovely child, full of mirth and frolic; and when she was six years old Hans loved her as much as his wife had done the first moment that she set eyes on her. For playfellow the lonely child had every animal on the farm. The old mare let her ride on her back, and the jealous cow let her play with her calf. The deep-voiced ewes quietly watched her run races with their frisky lambs, and the cat brought her kittens to her to be praised. When Bettina grew older she became very useful to her mother, as she called the farmer's wife. She learned to milk the cows, to make butter and cheese, and to look after the poultry. But what is more unusual than all this, the girl grew so astonishingly beautiful that sometimes at supper her foster-parents had to put down their spoons to look at her in amazement; and Bettina would laugh and say, 'What are you looking at? Is there a smut on my nose or a crumb on my chin?' and wipe her face with her white apron.

One evening Bettina was so extremely beautiful that the farmer and his wife could hardly tell whether it was her face or the candle that lighted the table; and Hans, forgetting that Bettina did not know that she was a foundling, looked at her and said:

'Wife, if we'd had a daughter of our own that had taken after us, she'd never have been as handsome as Bettina.'

'There, Hans, now you've done it! You've let the cat out of the bag!' cried Theckla. 'I always meant to tell the girl all about it myself some day.'

'Oh, father and mother, what do you mean? I am your daughter, am I not?' said Bettina, frightened by what she had heard.

'We're your parents, right enough, my dear,' said the farmer's wife, 'and love you better than the usual kind of parents love their children. For, look you, Heaven gave you to us ready made, and your father and I have brought you up out of pure love. I always meant to tell you myself how you were brought to the farm one stormy night when you were a little baby; but the right time never came, and I was afraid to vex you.'

Then Theckla told Bettina all that they knew about her, which was nothing, and how they loved her, which was very much; and to everything that his wife said, Hans said 'Ay, ay!

Bettina cried with self-pity to think that any one could have been so cruel as to leave her in a basket on a door-step. Then she kissed her kind foster-parents, and said, 'Though it seems I'm not myself, and don't know who I may be, I shall always love you dearly for being my dear, good father and mother. And I don't ever want to know who I really am, for I might be a thief or a beggar's child.'

'Not you!' said Hans. 'You're much more like a Princess!'

About this time a nephew of the farmer's, a fine young fellow called Caspar, came to live with them, to work with his uncle, and to learn to manage the farm. Hans and Theckla welcomed the youth, and Bettina welcomed him most of all, because she had no young companion and was very lonely. As for Caspar, he fell deeply in love with his uncle's adopted daughter at first sight, and thought it paradise to dwell under the same roof with the beautiful maiden.

'We shall have your nephew marrying our Bettina,' said Theckla one day.

'Worse things might happen,' said Hans. 'The lad is honest, and hasn't an ill thought in him; and he works as hard as the oxen that draw the plough.'

Bettina so trusted Caspar that one morning when he was digging in the garden she came to him and told him all about her strange coming to the farm, and what a dear father and mother the farmer and his good wife had been to her. Then she said, 'Tell me plainly who you think I can be?'

And Caspar, resting on his spade, looked in the girl's beautiful face, at her golden hair and small ears, delicate hands and feet; and there was that about her that he had never seen in woman before.

'I don't know who you are,' he said, 'and I don't wish to know, lest I should lose you. But I am sure, Bettina, that you are no peasant maiden.'

'Then, Caspar, suppose that a great, golden coach drove up to the porch some day—the porch where I was left in a basket—and a great lord and

lady came to claim their child and to take me away. What should I do?'

'You'd jump into the coach and drive away with your fine new friends, and leave us poor folks behind.'

'And what would you do, Caspar?'

'Do? I should follow you to the world's end of course, even if you were King Olaf's own daughter!' And Caspar struck his spade deep into the soil, and not another word would he speak.

When Caspar had worked hard at the farm for a year, he asked his uncle and aunt to let him be betrothed to Bettina, if Bettina, on her part, was willing. The old people consented gladly, for their nephew was brave and honest, and they did not think that Bettina would say him nay. So Caspar followed the beautiful maiden into the poultry-yard, and thought that he would speak to her while she fed the chickens.

'See, Caspar, how tame my birds are!' and Bettina took a handful of corn from the basket on her arm and scattered it before the excited poultry, saying, 'Come hither, my foolish ones!'

and laughing at their greedy scramble for the grain.

'Let me carry that heavy basket for you, Bettina;' and Caspar took it from her, and it grew lighter every minute as she filled both hands with corn from it.

'Shall I sing you and the birds a song I learned from an old peasant in the forest?' And Bettina, as she scattered the grain, sang in a full, sweet voice that made Caspar laugh with joy:

'Come hither! silly feathered folk,
That gobble, cluck, and crow,
Lay me an egg with golden yolk,
And shell as white as snow.

'Come, strutting cock and cackling hen,
To peck the yellow grain;
Come, flutt'ring all from perch and pen,
And fill your crops again.

'Come, fledgling bird and downy chick,
That flap your baby-wing;
There's food enough in barn and rick,
For all that chirp and sing.'

'Now the basket is empty of corn; but my heart is full of love for you, Bettina. If you

will be my dear wife I will plough and sow and reap for you. I will love you and take care of you always.'

And the beautiful maiden promised to marry Caspar, and they went indoors at once to tell the old people that they were betrothed.

At dinner they were very merry. Her mother told Bettina she must begin to spin her house-linen; and when she and Caspar were married she would give them a pig, and her father would give them a cow; and what more could a young couple want? And Caspar was so happy thinking of living in a cottage with Bettina that for the first time in his life he could not eat his pudding.

While they were still at table a heavy rumbling and the tramp of horses' feet were heard, and a gilded coach-and-six drew up in front of the little farm. The young lovers turned pale, and Caspar whispered, 'It is come!'

The farmer looked out of the window and said, 'Hey! hey! what is this?' And his wife had barely time to shake the crumbs off her apron before a noble gentleman clad in red velvet and carrying a plumed hat in his hand stood in the

porch and asked, 'Do the farmer Hans and his good wife Theckla live here?'

They were too much astonished to reply, and the gentleman entered the house, and, dropping on one knee before Bettina, raised her hand to his lips and kissed it.

'Princess, I am come hither by the order of my master, Olaf the King, to take you to your royal father's Court, and I am to assure these worthy folks who have tended you for seventeen years that their excellent conduct will be suitably rewarded by His Majesty.'

Bettina blushed rose-red, drew her hand away, and stood by Caspar's side.

'O sir!' said her mother, 'there is some mistake here; for though we are Hans and Theckla, your business cannot be with us or with our dear adopted child Bettina. She was a little outcast babe left in the porch there in a basket, whom we took and reared as our own; and a good girl she is, and betrothed to that young man there, our nephew Caspar, as good a young fellow as ever stepped; and when they're married I'm going to give them a pig, and my husband there is going to give them a cow. You are mistaken in

everything, sir; for all the world knows our good King never had a daughter, and if he had had one she wouldn't have been our adopted daughter, don't you see? So make our duty to King Olaf, and I'll send him a cream-cheese or a few fresh eggs by you, sir, and kindly explain to him that some one's been making a fool of him.'

'Be silent, Theckla; the gentleman can't get a word in edgeways,' said the farmer.

'Now that the good-wife has had her say, I will explain matters,' said the King's messenger. 'The Crown Prince is dead, and so is Queen Fiorablonda; but before she died the Queen confessed that the Crown Prince was no son of hers, but a washerwoman's child, whom the Queen, at the evil suggestion of the nurse, had put in place of the daughter born to her. This the Queen did, fearing the King's displeasure should he be disappointed of a male heir. The King sent for the nurse, and found that all had happened as the Queen said, and that the infant Princess had been left at your door, and charitably brought up by you. The supposed Crown Prince was nephew to the nurse, who has already paid the death-penalty for her crime.'

Bettina flung her arms about Theckla's neck. 'O mother! am I to be taken away from you? Must I leave you all?'

'Oh, my child, this is a dreadful thing! You are a real live Princess, Bettina.—O sir! I might have known that she was of royal birth. I see it all now. She has never been one of our sort, though we love her so, but has always been delicate and refined. Why, sir, at dinner she takes but one plateful of the best, where we take three apiece of all sorts. And her delicacy! Why, when the bull broke loose at night, and bellowed under the window, presently it woke her up; while Hans and me slept through it and a thunderstorm on top of all! Oh, my pretty Princess!'

'Will the Princess say good-bye to her friends?' said the King's messenger. 'The King's orders are strict. We must not delay, and a lady-in-waiting is in the coach with a cloak and hood for the Princess's use.'

Caspar clasped Bettina's hand. 'You were mine, Bettina, before you were a Princess.'

'And I am yours still, though I am King Olaf's daughter,' said Bettina sturdily.

'Nay, Princess, this is not seemly,' said the King's messenger. 'The King's daughter may wed none but a Prince, and him only with her royal father's consent.'

Then Hans spoke: 'No, no, Princess Bettina; it's all over now! You can't join the new life on to the old; it must be one thing or the other. The crown cannot mate with the plough. Caspar must be a brave lad, and bid his pretty maid good-bye;' and tears ran down the farmer's face.

'The King shall be told of your wisdom,' said the King's messenger, laying a large purse full of gold on the table. 'My royal master can be indebted to no one for the maintenance of his only child, though the debt that he owes you and your good-wife for your loving kindness to the Princess, even he can never repay.'

The royal messenger then pressed a second purse into Caspar's hand, saying cheerfully, 'Here, young fellow, buy a farm with this and forget your disappointment. You're not the first child that's cried for the moon!' But Caspar dashed the money on the ground, stamped on it, and rushed from the house like a madman.

Then a tearful farewell was said by the good folks to their foster-child. The gilded coach rumbled along the high-road with Bettina seated in it, wrapped in a white fur cloak and hood, crying bitterly, and being reminded by the lady-in-waiting that such conduct was unworthy of a royal Princess.

When Bettina arrived at the palace after a long journey, the King at once demanded to see his daughter. She entered his presence just as she was, in her peasant's red dress, with white bodice and apron, blue stockings and thick shoes, and her golden hair hanging down her back in two long plaits. The King put on his spectacles the better to see her, and Bettina stood before him with drooping head and folded hands.

King Olaf looked long at his daughter; then he spoke. 'Hold up thy head, maiden!'

Bettina looked the King timidly in the face, and he nodded approval.

'Well, maiden, what dost thou think of the King, thy father?'

'Sire, I think that I like my peasant father, whom I know, best,' said Bettina.

The King frowned. 'That belongs to the past,

maiden; thou art now King Olaf's daughter. Did thy peasant friends teach thee anything? What dost thou know, my child?'

'Sire, I know about farm-work, and the dairy, and the care of poultry, that my good foster-mother taught me. And I can do many other useful things besides. I can sew and knit and spin.'

'Very pretty accomplishments for a peasant, my dear. But we must train thee as a Princess now. Thou must learn to speak foreign tongues, and to play the lute and sing.'

'But, sire, I can sing. I don't need to be taught that.'

'Then let me hear thee sing,' said the King pleasantly.

And, forgetting the King and the courtiers about her watching her every look, Bettina, thinking only of Caspar, sang in her powerful, sweet voice her poultry ballad, while her royal father nodded and smiled and clapped his hands in applause.

'By my beard! that's a song worth hearing! Keep it for thy father, to charm him when he is sad or angry; but don't sing it to thy Italian

singing-master. And now, maiden, what is thy name?'

'Bettina, sire.'

'Bettina! A name for an old cow, not for a royal Princess!'

'I know not how that may be, sire; but the priest gave it me at the font, and there are those who love to call me Bettina;' and her voice fell to a whisper.

'There will be no more of that, maiden. Remember this is now thy home, and thou art King Olaf's only child, and more beautiful even than thy mother, Queen Fiorablonda. Though now thou smellest of the fields, a year or two at Court will rid thee of that rustic perfume, and thou wilt be a true Princess;' and the old King kissed his daughter and handed her over to the care of a number of elderly ladies, each one pledged to change the poor girl in some way or other from what she then was.

Bettina found it hard work to become a real Princess. She had to learn many things that she cared nothing about, and whenever she spoke she was corrected for her peasant accent or for bad grammar. And she was homesick, and longed for

her foster-parents, and Caspar, and the poultry. But soon her new surroundings in the palace began to interest her, though nothing made her forget her dear, simple home. The King grew very fond of his daughter, and Bettina no longer feared him, and tried to please him by learning her lessons. It grieved King Olaf when his beautiful child was silent and sad, and he asked her what ailed her.

'Sire,' she said, 'let me have a cow to milk and I shall be happy enough.'

'Thou a Princess, and would so demean thyself!' said the King.

'But, sire, did not God make cows before He made princesses?'

The King laughed. 'Thou art but a peasant at heart after all!' And because he could refuse her nothing, she was dressed in a milkmaid's costume of silk and satin, and taken to a shed where stood a patient cow awaiting her, with gilded horns and hoofs, and a silver milk-pail by its side. A lackey carried a velvet-covered stool for Bettina to sit on, and it was all so artificial and absurd that Bettina never again asked at Court to milk a cow.

While Bettina was being made into a Princess, Caspar grew into a brave man. He left the farm and travelled into a neighbouring country, where he learnt the language and hired himself out as a wood-cutter. One day, when he was felling timber at the edge of the forest, the King's only son, who had got separated from his companions in the hunt and lost his way, came wandering by. The Prince was weary, and leaned against the trunk of a tree to rest, when a great bear came out of the thicket, and with one blow of its huge paw stretched the Prince senseless on the ground. Caspar rushed at the angry beast and killed it with his axe. The King was so grateful to him for saving the Crown Prince's life that he promised to give Caspar whatever he should ask. Then said Caspar, 'Sire, give me the education of a gentleman at your Court. Let me be taught by wise men, and let me learn the use of arms and all knightly accomplishments, that I may be fitted to stand before kings and princes.'

The King kept his word; and Caspar was an apt pupil, and became a refined and noble gentleman, much esteemed by the King, his master.

Nothing of the farm-boy was left in him but his honest heart, which remained what it ever had been, a shrine sacred to Bettina. Caspar never spoke of his ambition, for he would have been called a madman. But he was determined to marry the Princess Bettina, and that as soon as possible.

When Bettina had lived a number of years at her father's Court, and learned all that her masters could teach her, she became a most accomplished Princess. And King Olaf thought it time that his daughter should marry, and kings and princes came flocking to ask her; but to each and all she said no. Then the King was angry, and told Bettina that she had grown proud and thought no one good enough for her.

'Sire, not so,' she said. 'It is not pride, for I am thinking of the youth I was betrothed to when I was a peasant girl; and till I forget him kings may come and kings may go—I'll have none of them.'

And the King said wrathfully, 'Daughter, it were black disgrace for a Princess to wed a plough-boy!'

'True, sire; but Caspar may be changed as I

am, and fit now to wed nobly.' For Bettina had word from her foster-mother that Caspar had become a great man in a foreign land.

Father and daughter were each obstinate as the other, and the more Bettina said she would not marry the more the King said she should marry. At length, when the Princess had refused all the bachelor kings and princes, and hoped that she should be troubled no more, King Olaf said, 'Thou shalt never again be asked in marriage, yet shalt thou wed! I will give thee to the bravest man who shall fight for thee. Brave and honest gentlemen shall engage in single combat; and to the most gallant I will give thee, self-willed maiden.'

Then King Olaf sent out a proclamation the length and breadth of the land. He invited every gentleman who wished to be his son-in-law to take part in a tournament to be held in his presence, and the hand of the Princess Bettina should be bestowed on him who most excelled in feats of arms.

The King was much surprised that only six knights cared to contend for so great a prize. But it was explained to him that since the

Princess looked down on kings and princes, gentlemen feared their chances were but small. However, those who did come forward were bravest of the brave; and the King said, 'If my wilful daughter does not find a husband among the half-dozen, at least we shall have good sport.'

On the day of the tournament King Olaf and Princess Bettina, wearing royal robes and crowns, sat in a gallery decked with flowers and green boughs, overlooking the tilting-ground. To right and left of them were thousands of spectators seated on benches like steps one above the other, all eager to witness the struggle for the hand of the beautiful Princess. They cheered lustily when the champions entered the field, riding noble horses, in trappings of velvet and cloth-of-gold. The esquires set up the knights' standards, the heralds sounded their trumpets, and the six combatants in glittering armour rode slowly towards the royal gallery. There they halted, and, bending their helmeted heads to the saddle-bow and lowering their lances, saluted the King and Princess.

Each knight bore a device and motto on his shield. On one was the rising sun with golden

rays, and beneath it the words, 'I shine on all.' Another bore an oak-tree with a ship below, and the motto, 'By land and by sea.' But the device which pleased Bettina most, and set her heart beating quickly, was that on the shield of the noblest-looking knight. His visor was closed, and she could not see his face; but his form was princely, he rode magnificently, and his armour flashed and shone as he moved. On his shield was emblazoned on a green ground a russet-clad peasant standing with a plough before him, and both hands raised to grasp a crown beyond his reach, with the motto, 'I will if I can.'

King Olaf put on his spectacles and carefully scanned the combatants and their arms. 'See, my daughter,' he said, 'yonder Knight of the Plough is an aspiring carl! He would rise from the plough to the crown. There is ambition for you writ large!'

The champions had now drawn lots who should first challenge his fellows one after another to single combat. Princess Bettina held six straws with the ends only showing beyond her white fingers, and the knights, in the order in which

they entered the field, each drew one from her hand. Great was her joy when the goodly Knight of the Plough drew the longest straw, and she heard his deep voice from behind the bars of his helmet say, 'I will if I can, and I can if I will!'

The trumpets sounded, the people shouted, and the Knight of the Plough ran a-tilt at the five other knights one after another, unseating each and hurling him from the saddle. Two lances were splintered against his shield; but he sat firm as a rock, and his great black horse snorted for a fresh encounter. Then the Knight of the Rising Sun in his turn challenged the Knight of the Plough. Men and horses met with a shock that shook the ground; and though this time he did not unseat his adversary, neither did he himself suffer any rebuff.

When the last champion ran a-tilt at the Knight of the Plough his lance struck him under the chin, and he reeled in the saddle, and Princess Bettina screamed aloud.

'Silence, child!' said the old King, 'or scream for all six; but I will have no favour shown.' And Bettina sat still and watched the tide of

battle roll among her suitors, and at every victory of the Knight of the Plough her eyes flashed and her cheeks glowed with joy.

When the dreadful hand-to-hand conflict with the sword came, Princess Bettina thought that all was lost. The Knight of the Oak and Ship drew the long straw, and had the right first to challenge his opponents. All that went before was play compared to the last struggle for victory. The knights fought with such valour and fury that blood flowed like water, swords were broken, helmets battered, and shields dinted. There lay five senseless bodies on the ground; none stood upright but the Knight of the Plough, who had overcome his adversaries singly in fair fight.

Wounded and bruised, the conqueror advanced towards the royal gallery, and, leaning heavily on his sword, bowed his head before the King and Princess Bettina. 'King Olaf,' he said, 'faithfully I have obeyed the rules of the contest; honestly and in your sight I have encountered and overcome in fair fight five knights who with me have entered into this noble competition. Sire, if you are satisfied that my victory is

attained in all honour, I claim the promised reward, the hand of your daughter, the Princess Bettina.'

Then the King replied, 'Let us see, Sir Knight, who and what manner of man you are who claim so great a prize.'

The Knight of the Plough raised his visor, and Princess Bettina recognised the familiar features of her long-lost betrothed. 'Caspar!—my Caspar!' she cried.

'Yes, I am Caspar of the Plough and Caspar the Knight, as thou art Bettina the peasant maiden and Bettina the Princess. Did I not tell thee that I would follow thee to the world's end, even though thou wert King Olaf's daughter?'

And Bettina gave him her hand to kiss, and laughed for joy.

'I am the happiest, most fortunate maiden in the world!' she said.—'My father, it was you who said I must marry the victorious knight, and see! he is Caspar, to whom I was betrothed in my foster-parents' house; and you cannot break your kingly word.'

'True, child; nor would I break it if I could,

for Sir Caspar pleases me well, and I will make him a Prince on his wedding-day.'

Shortly afterwards there was a grand wedding, at which Hans and Theckla were present in their Sunday peasants' costumes, and they lived to see their nephew Caspar and their foster-child Bettina a great King and Queen.

Edinburgh:
Printed by W. & R. Chambers, Limited.